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THE RISE OF COMBAT JIU JITSU

DILLON DANIS

FINDING BJJ INSPIRATION

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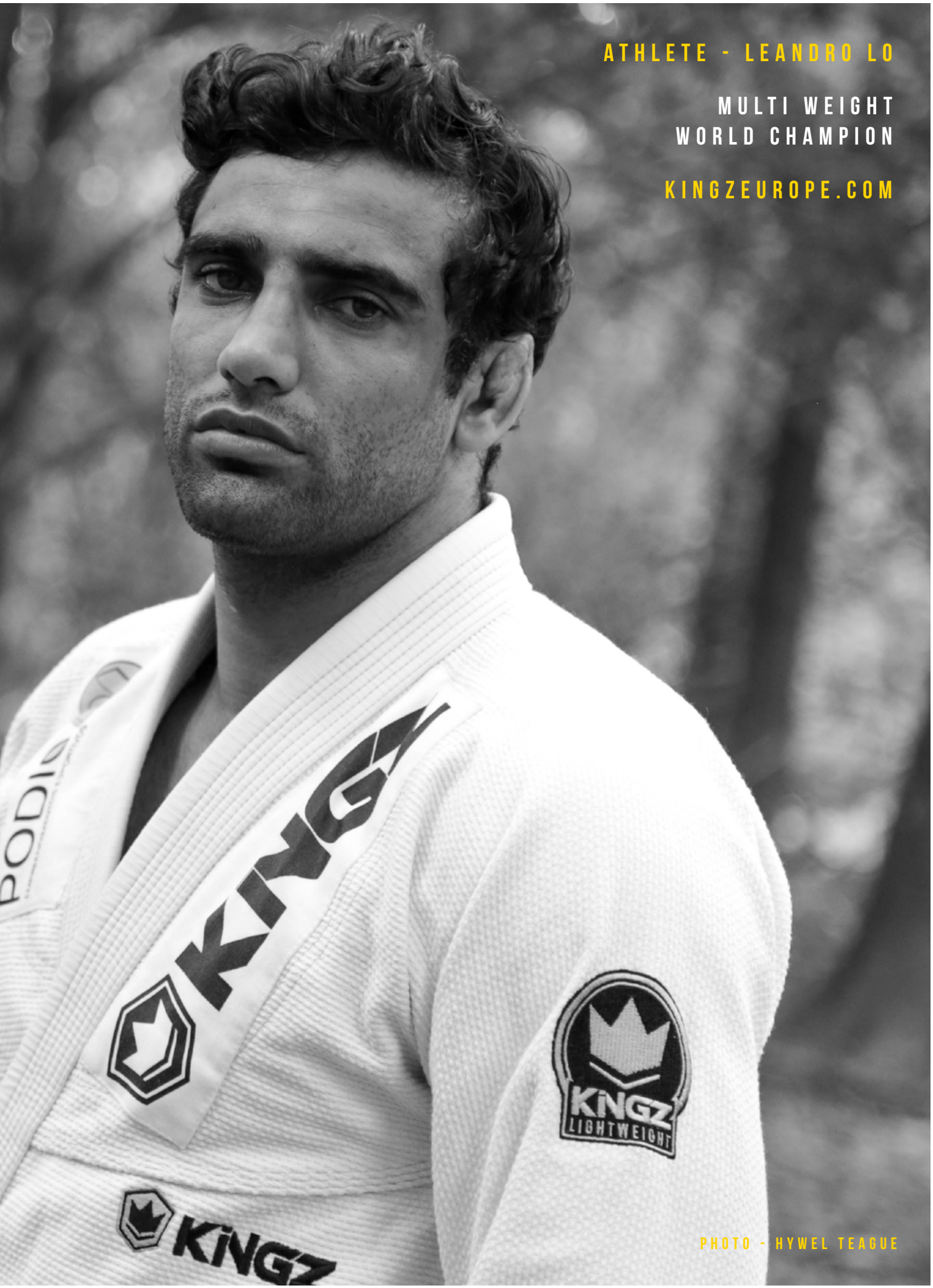
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Combat Jiu Jitsu

JIU JITSU STYLE

SECOND FRONT

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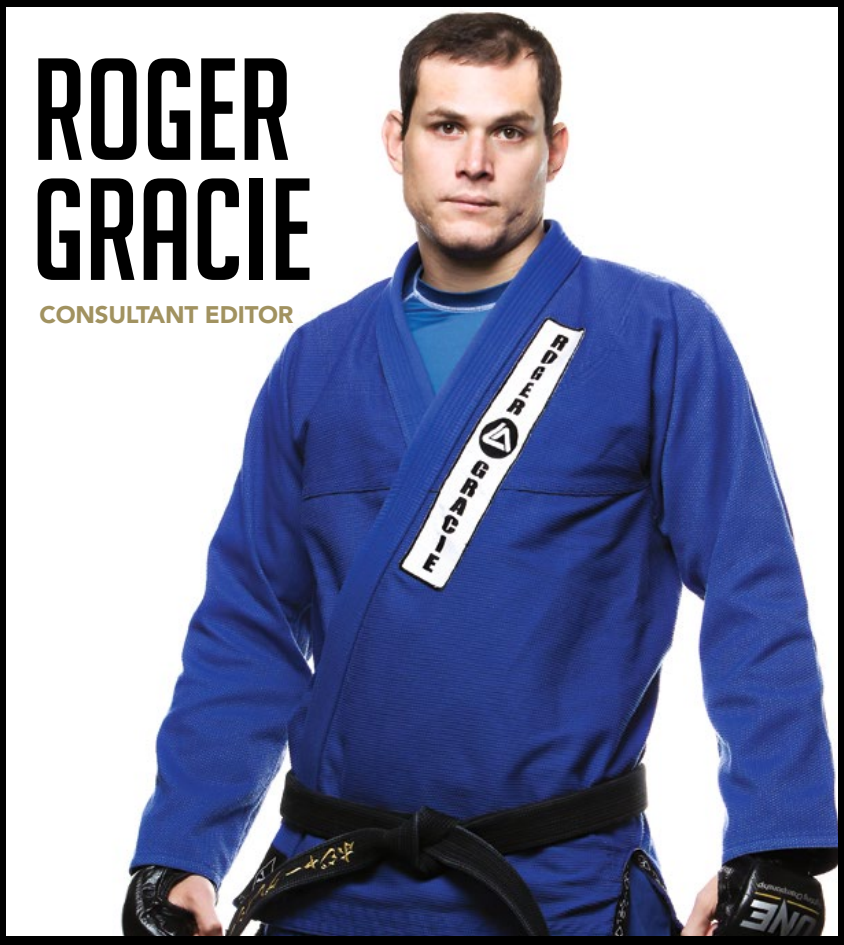
ROGER GRACIE

CONSULTANT EDITOR



"I AM FOCUSED ON EITHER DEFENDING MY BELT OR ADDING ANOTHER TITLE TO THE COLLECTION NEXT TIME UP"

It's amazing how quickly time flies, as we are already approaching the end of 2016 and with it, our final magazine of the year. As always, we've tried our hardest to bring you the best content possible: covering the biggest events, speaking to interesting people and sharing helpful techniques.

The end of a year is always a great time to reflect and look back at the things you've achieved or positive steps you've made. As martial artists, we are on a constant journey of improvement, so I challenge you to set some goals for 2017 and to do your best to fulfill them. It could be to enter a competition, train an extra session a week, try cross training another discipline or whatever else motivates you. Trust me, setting goals will always help!

I have to take a moment to congratulate my friend, and Roger Gracie Academy instructor, Charles Negromonte, who put in some amazing performances on the competition mat recently. He was on top form against Eduardo Rios at Polaris Pro, which was great to see, as "Teta" is a fantastic fighter and a big scalp to claim. Charles then picked up a silver medal at the IBJJF Nogi Worlds, and I've no doubt he will one day achieve his goal of becoming a world champion.

We have a very interesting cover feature with Eddie Bravo inside this issue. Eddie has always been very open to innovation and isn't scared to share his thoughts and try out new things, which I think is something to be respected. He has some big ideas set for 2017, so make sure you read this interview to hear his thoughts.

We have also lined-up a fantastic Masterclass with Marcus "Buchecha" Almeida, who is probably the best jiu jitsu athlete in the world right now. Buchecha goes over some armlock variations, which is a technique that he's been using very well recently, so you're sure to pick something up from this feature.

On a personal level, I've been busy training hard and preparing myself for my next fight. Unfortunately the date has had to change, and I am not 100% sure when I'll next get in the cage, but I am hopeful it will be sooner rather than later. Since picking up a ONE FC world title, I feel more motivated than ever to keep pushing forward and developing as a fighter. There's plenty more to come, and I am focused on either defending my belt, or adding another title to the collection next time up.

In closing, I'd like to thank you all for picking up the magazine and supporting *Jiu Jitsu Style* – here's to another year of development in 2017!

Enjoy the latest issue of the magazine guys and – until next time – keep training and enjoying jiu jitsu.

ROGER GRACIE

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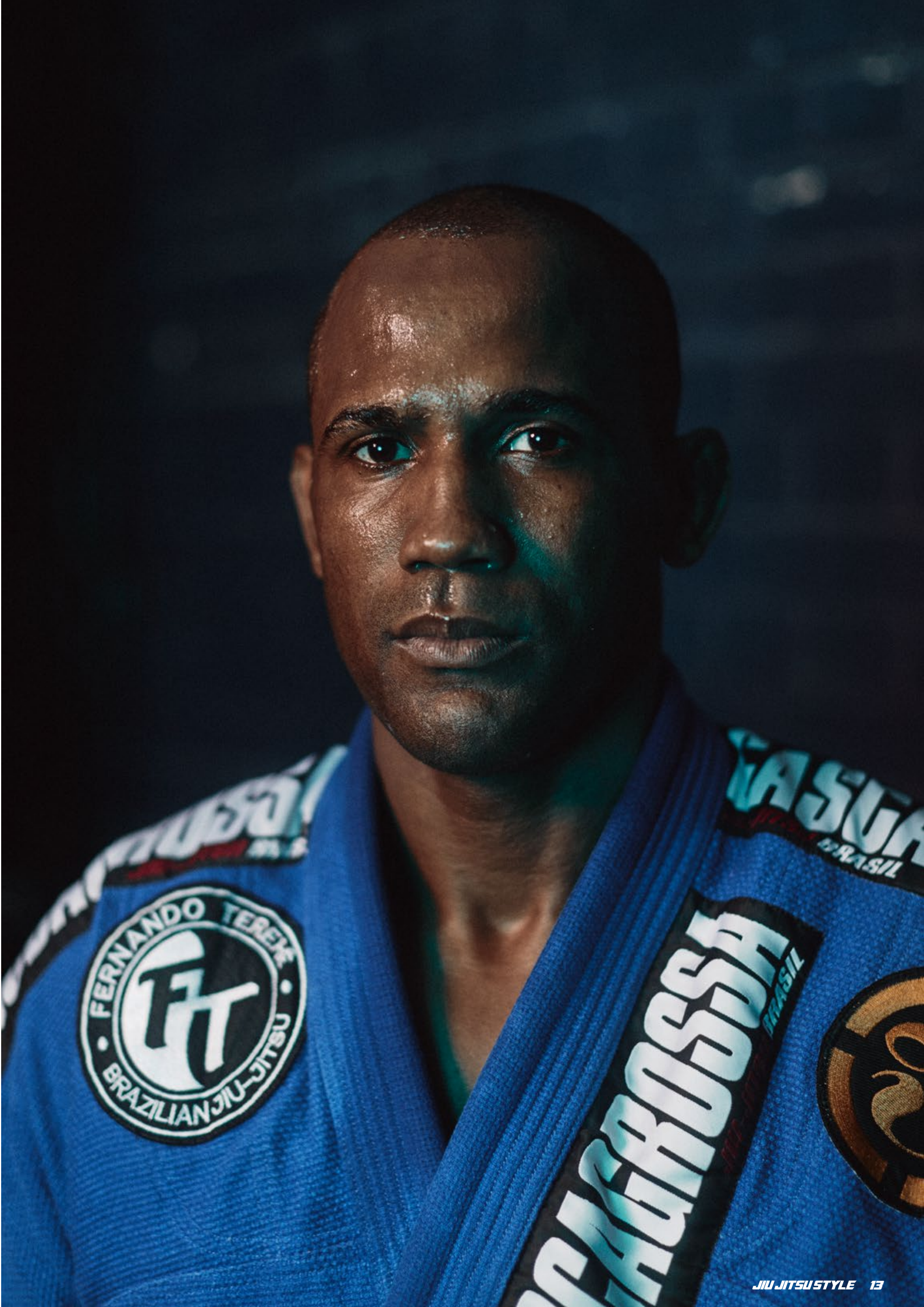
THE BIG PICTURE

Straight off the mat and in front of the camera: Garry Tonon and Fernando "Terere" Augusto were on top form at Polaris Pro 4 in Poole, England.

PORTRAITS: ANDY DOUGLAS


FERNANDO TERERÉ
BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU
GRACIE BARROSSA
BRASIL

CLASSIC MATCH

"EVERYONE NEEDS TO CONTINUE TO RESPECT ROYCE. EVERYBODY LOST IN JIU-JITSU " - WALLID ISMAIL

WALLID ISMAIL VS ROYCE GRACIE

Back in the late '90s, Royce was seen by the general public as an invincible fighter, scion of a family full of superheroes. Sakuraba had not yet smashed that illusion of grappling omnipotence, which marked the Gracie family's descent to mortal status. In Brazil, the public knew better. They had seen people surnamed Gracie lose plenty of times, from Helio and Jorge through to more recent examples. The best known Gracie nemesis at the time was arguably Wallid Ismail.

Wallid had been training under Carlson Gracie since 1984, part of the powerhouse team that would dominate BJJ for a number of years. The first Gracie who fell to the man from Manaus was Ralph, in 1991. Wallid beat him on points after 10 minutes. The Gracie family pointed to the time limit as the reason for Ralph's loss. Wallid agreed to their demands for the next fight, with the limit upped to a full hour when he faced Ralph's brother Renzo in 1995. The result was the same, a Wallid victory on points (9-0). His teacher Carlson had said prior to the match that while Wallid may not have been part of the Gracie family, he was just as good as any of them. So far, Wallid had proven that statement to be true, in terms of competition.

By 1998, it was Royce Gracie's turn: he didn't want any time limit at all. Originally, other members of the Carlson team had been lined up as opponents. According to Murilo Bustamante, both he and reigning world champion Mario Sperry were asked by Jose Moraes (the secretary of sport in Rio de Janeiro) if they wanted to compete against Royce. Some versions of the story claim that neither Bustamante nor Sperry were willing to fight without time limits, but their team mate Wallid shrugged and accepted the terms. In a July 2000 issue of *Black Belt*, Bustamante disputes this: he claims that

"It's a big lie. This is out of context with my career as a fighter. Historically I have never rejected a fight with anyone for any reason. I have faced opponents with skills far greater than Royce's. […] The money was good - $20,000. […] Wallid had lost in the World Jiu Jitsu Championships and in Japan. I did not agree with the ethic of Wallid's approach to the Royce situation. The fight with Royce was decided by a team effort, and Wallid pursued the fight on his own."

The magazine had spoken to Sperry too, a year earlier in their May 1999 issue. He was less accusatory, saying simply that he was "not really sure" what happened, as "when they announced that I had backed out, I stopped paying attention." The fight was set for the 17th December 1998 at the 2nd Oscar de Jiu Jitsu Contra a Violencia. The headline match between Royce and Wallid generated an audience of seven thousand in attendance.

Earlier, Royce had told *Black Belt Magazine* that "the process of training for this fight and the fight itself will give me a good indication of when I will be ready to compete in no-holds-barred fighting—which I am eager to do." Most of the report talked about Royce's build-up to that return, having missed out on a big match with Mark Kerr due to a back injury. It would prove to be rather more than a mere tune-up fight.

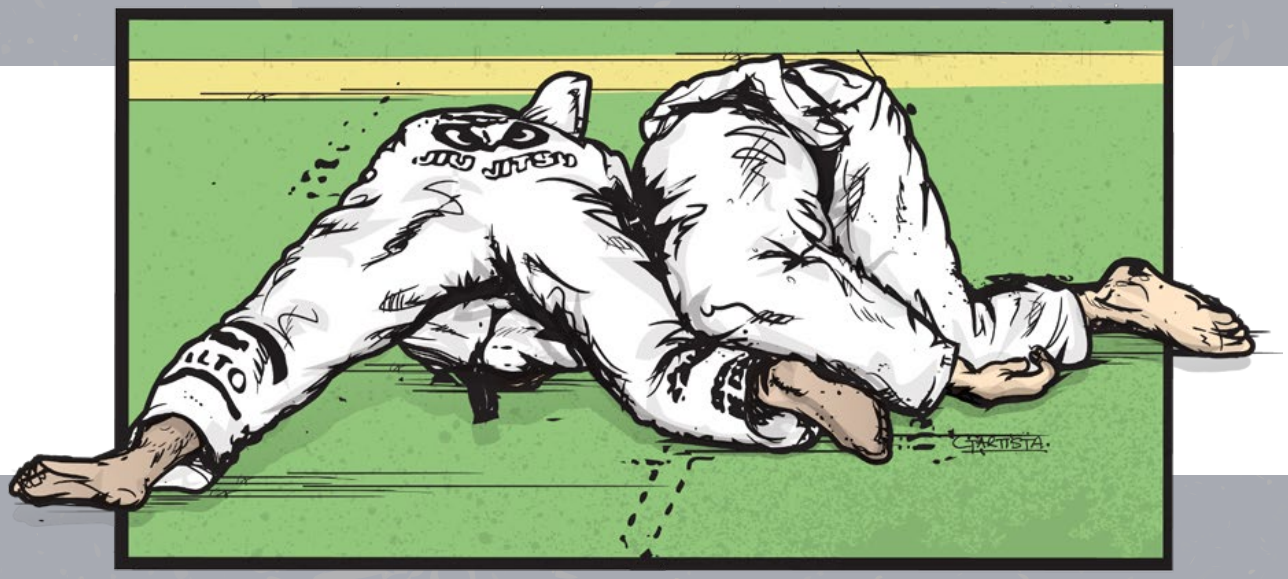
WORDS: CAN SÖNMEZ ILLUSTRATIONS: GARTISTA

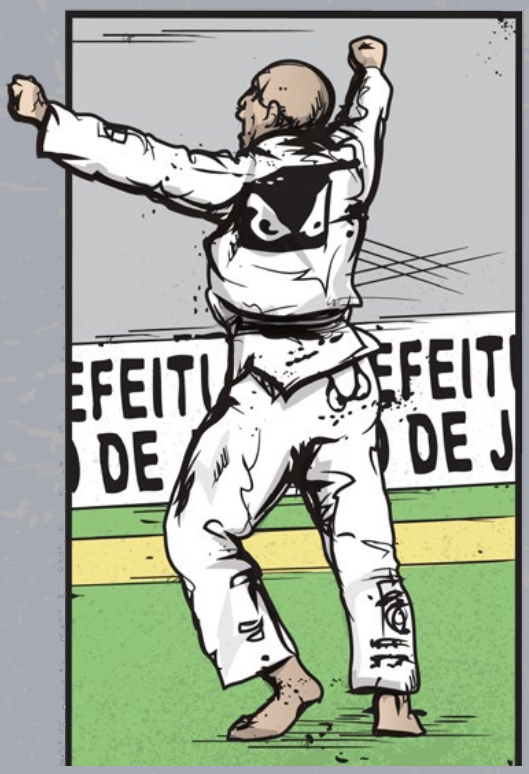
THE MATCH

After gripping up from the feet and a few tentative attacks, Royce manages to reverse Wallid's takedown attempt. In the ensuing scramble the Gracie representative almost locks on a crucifix, but Wallid is able to pop out, trying to get Royce's back. Again Royce comes out on top, giving up the front headlock to drop into a triangle from guard. Wallid was noted for his passing game, which proved decisive here. Not wanting to accept the pass, Royce turtles. That enables Wallid to establish his favoured clock choke: Royce tries to free himself, but then stops moving. He's out: the referee runs in to stop the fight.

MATCH LENGTH: 5 MINS
LOCATION: RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
VENUE: MARACANA STADIUM
EVENT: CHALLENGE MATCH

"FOR THOSE IN THE KNOW, THE RESULT WAS NOT ALL THAT SURPRISING. AFTER ALL, ROYCE HAD NEVER BEEN A BJJ COMPETITOR ON THE LEVEL OF RALPH OR THE HEAVILY DECORATED RENZO, BOTH OF WHOM HAD ALREADY FALLEN TO WALLID"





AFTERMATH

For those in the know, the result was not all that surprising. After all, Royce had never been a BJJ competitor on the level of Ralph or the heavily decorated Renzo, both of whom had already fallen to Wallid. To the rest of the world, however, it was a shock, particularly the UFC fans who had seen Wallid's underwhelming performance at UFC XII a year earlier. Royce Gracie, the Ultimate Fighting Champion from the ultimate fighting family, turned out to be fallible. Mario Sperry, who had beaten Royce's brother Royler with the same clock choke, was dismissive of Royce's ability. He blamed Royce's long-term residence in the US:

"Royce Gracie is clueless as to what has happened in jiu jitsu in Brazil. His performance showed that. Every year, new techniques are developed and refined. To even think about competing successfully in Brazil, you must know every new technique and its strategy, or you will lose very quickly. When I watched Royce fight Wallid, I was quite surprised at his strategy. It was like going to a museum. His technique was very old, and there was no way he could defend himself against Wallid."

In another interview with *Black Belt Magazine*, Wallid was less damning (or perhaps simply more US-focused), referring to Royce as "the best in the Gracie family. This is not just my opinion, but the general public's opinion as well. I have shown the world that I can beat the best, and I can do it again." Speaking to Eddie Goldman, Wallid added:

"Royce is an excellent fighter. Now a lot of people speak bullshit. Everybody forgets that Royce beat everybody. Because he won, everyone respected him. Everyone needs to continue to respect Royce. Everybody lost in Jiu-Jitsu. I lost. Mike Tyson, Muhammad Ali, all these guys lost. Just God is invincible."

SOURCES: 'THE MAN WHO BEAT THREE GRACIES', EDDIE GOLDMAN, *GRAPPLING MAGAZINE*, 1999 • *BLACK BELT MAGAZINE* • PEDREIRA, ROBERTO, *CHOQUE VOL. 3*

POSITION STUDY

THE HEEL HOOK

THE HEEL HOOK IS A GRAPPLING SUBMISSION HOLD COMMONLY UTILISED IN JIU JITSU, CATCH WRESTLING, SAMBO AND MIXED MARTIAL ARTS. IT IS APPLIED BY CONTROLLING THE KNEE/HIP JOINT(S) AS WELL AS THE HEEL BONE, AFTER WHICH FORCE IS APPLIED TRANSVERSELY, TWISTING THE HEEL EITHER MEDIALLY OR LATERALLY. THIS MOTION WILL FORCE A TORQUE ON THE ANKLE, WHICH IN TURN TRANSFERS THE TORQUE TO THE KNEE, CAUSING POSSIBLE INJURY TO MULTIPLE JOINTS AND LIGAMENTS.

THE HISTORY OF THE HEEL HOOK

Grappling is one of the oldest activities known to man. As such, most of our sport's modern day positions have their roots pointing back thousands of years, in one form or another, with the heel hook being no different.

One of the earliest forms of grappling, where the heel hook can be observed through the culture's artwork, is in Ancient Greece. The popular Pankration and its technical advances were transposed to Roman culture, which absorbed a wide range of aspects of Ancient Greek social life. When going through Nektarios Lykiardopoulos's book "*The Martial Arts of Ancient Greece: Modern Fighting Techniques from the Age of Alexander*" we can identify a very clear heel hook being depicted on a Roman stone carving (age uncertain) that can be found in a Vatican Museum, applied by a centaur.

Digging deeper on this subject, there are many ancient Egyptian wrestling drawings that show a variety of leg attacks, including kneebars, prior to ancient Greece. Though, with our limited resources, we couldn't find any that showed clear heel hooks.

APPLICATION IN BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU

There are a few myths surrounding the heel hook technique in jiu jitsu. One of which is that the famous 1960s grappler, Ivan Gomes, would have been the creator of the submission. This claim was only strengthened by one of Master Carlson Gracie's interviews to Marcelo Alonso of PVT, many years ago, in which Carlson mentions:

"*He [Ivan] arrived in Rio for a fight and asked to stay and train with me. Later he travelled the world, and was the first Brazilian fighter to become a big star in Japan. The heel hook that we use today was created by him.*"

Since Ivan passed away in 1990, we met with coral belt, José Gomes, Ivan Gomes' younger brother, who trained with him all his life. José said:

"*The heel hook existed before us. It came through the Japanese, who landed here in Northeast of Brazil. Our coach Zé Maria [José Maria Freire] taught us these positions. He learned them from Takeo Yano and Builson Osmar. Yano came from a different lineage, not really from the Kodokan. He had been with the Japanese Imperial Navy and his school was called Butokukai. He was a great fighter, Helio [Gracie] drew with him. Yano and George [Gracie] were training partners for a long time too, here in the Northeast.*"

Though Ivan was certainly the first grappler in Brazil to bring attention to the heel hook submission, Takeo Yano was indeed one of the great disseminators of jiu jitsu in the north-eastern region of Brazil in the first half of the 20th century. There he taught and competed for many years, leaving very solid students who went on to lead successful schools, one of which is still running strong today, the SAS of Master Francisco Sá, now under the management of his son "Sazinho".

THE HEEL HOOK IN SPORT JIU JITSU

Jiu jitsu started taking shape as a sport in the early 1970s. With the first federation (inaugurated in 1969), several of the top instructors in the Rio de Janeiro area gathered to outline the rules for jiu jitsu's sporting environment. This was when the first point system was set, and also when the restriction book was more clearly outlined. Positions such as the heel hook, the kneebar and spinal locks were banned.According to coral belt, Pascoal Duarte:

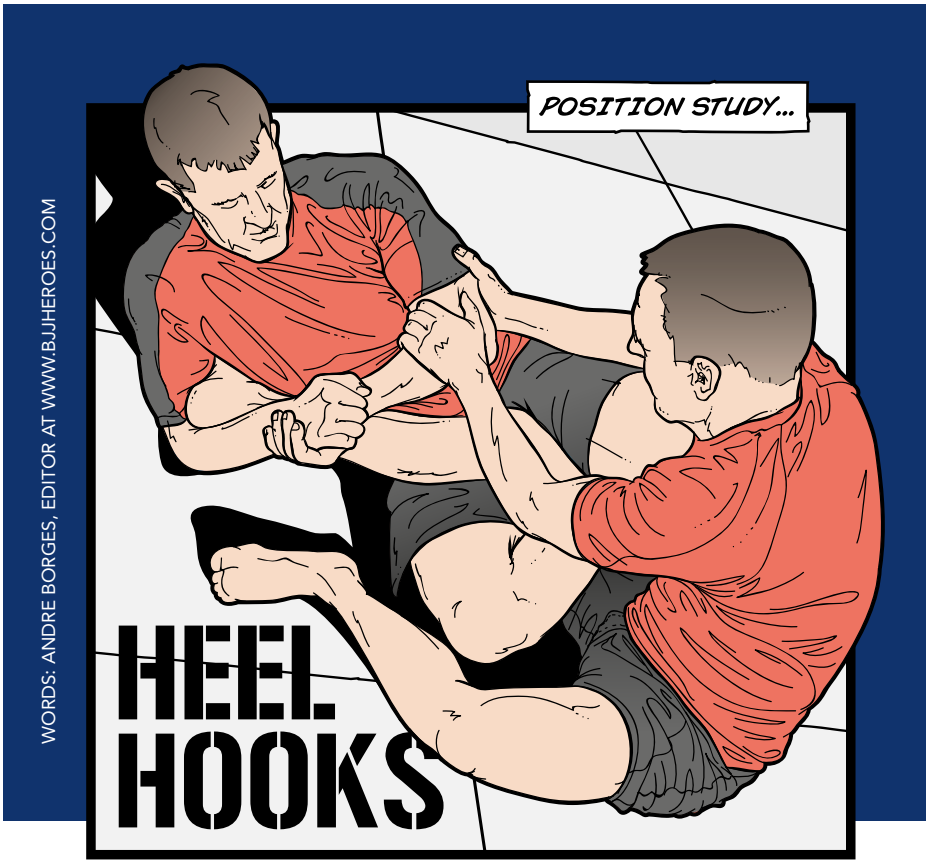
"*As soon as jiu jitsu became a sport these positions were ruled out. Even in training they weren't allowed, and if you tried to do them you would be regarded as rude or lacking in technique.*"

What Master Duarte meant with the "lacking in technique" comment was that this rule imposed a stigma on the heel hook, one in which you would only go for "footlocks" if you weren't technical enough to pass a guard properly. Positional dominance was considered the key factor in accordance with the old BJJ dogma "position before submission".

During the late 1990s, once jiu jitsu opened its doors to foreign competitors, mainly from the USA, heel hooks slowly made their way back into the sport, particularly in its nogi format through promotions such as the ADCC, NAGA, Grapplers Quest and numerous other international tournaments.

The resurgence of the "submission only" platform in 2012, has helped push the heel hook envelope even further. Promotions such as Polaris Pro, EBI and Metamoris have been highly successful at raising awareness of the importance of this submission in the grappling martial arts concept.

ILLUSTRATION: GARTISTA



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Progress JIU JITSU

BELT PROMOTIONS

IF YOU WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE AWARDED A NEW BELT RECENTLY, THIS PAGE REPRESENTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SAVOUR THE MOMENT WITH RECOGNITION IN JIU JITSU STYLE! SEND IN DETAILS OF YOUR RECENT PROMOTION, INCLUDING THE RANK YOU ACHIEVED AND YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, AND WE WILL PUBLISH AS MANY AS WE CAN IN OUR MAGAZINE.

SEND YOUR EMAILS TO U2US@BJJSTYLE.COM

New School BJJ's first female black belt awarded to Leoni Munslow on behalf of Helio Soneca on 19th September.

Ben Bryant was awarded his purple belt under Luiz 'Manxinha' Ribeiro at London Fight Factory.

Kent Jones, Doug Andrechek and Chris Robinson all received their brown belts from Rowan Cunningham at Abhaya MMA, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Robert Garod received his purple belt at the Marcelo Garcia Academy in New York City under Marcelo Garcia, Paul Schreiner and Bernardo Faria.

David McKenzie-Phillips and Ben Howard were promoted to brown belt by Jimmy Johnston and Micah Atkinson at Phoenix BJJ Southampton.

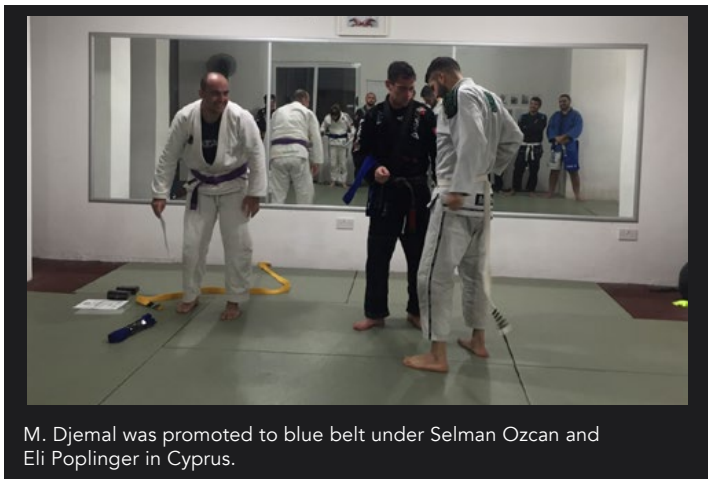
Jerome Marchand received his blue belt and Sylvain Lefevre his brown belt under Guylain Frenette and Olivier Kee Seng in Quebec City, Canada.

Derek Kaivani received his 1st degree on his black belt from Sam Joseph at Buckhead Jiu-Jitsu in Atlanta.

Vicki Cassels was promoted to blue belt under Sylvio Behring alongside Ken Sumner.

Justin Carmichael was promoted to blue belt by head instructor Daniel Roy at Goliath BJJ in Haltom City, TX.

Saracul Veaceslav was promoted to blue belt by Mariusz Domasat.



M. Djemal was promoted to blue belt under Selman Ozcan and Eli Poplinger in Cyprus.

Jeff Lucarino was promoted to purple belt at Gracie Barra, in London Ontario Canada, by Professor Fateh Belkalm.

Steve Angelica was promoted to blue belt by Luigi Mondelli, founder of Kore BJJ, and his instructor, Dennis Hill.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR
PICTURE: GOLIVE

BEING A JIU JITSU AVERAGE JOE

I've been training for quite a while now, and much like I imagine you'd deal with a mid life crisis, I'm starting to worry that I have become a jiu jitsu average Joe – tell me I'm not alone?

When I started BJJ nine years ago, I was adamant I was going to be a complete badass on the mats, and quickly. After all, I'd done my research, I watched the UFC and I knew what a triangle choke was, so how could I not be awesome at this s*** quicker than other students?

I vividly remember setting myself the goal of getting my blue belt within three months. Not because I wanted to be recognised with a super-quick promotion, but because I wanted to reach that level of grappling competence quicker than anyone else. My favourite fighter of all time is BJ Penn, so you can see where I was coming from.

Having started my jits journey while at university, I had plenty of free time to train and I threw myself into the sport head first, making sure I was at the academy every session possible and immersing myself fully into this new passion; what a beautiful gift I'd been given. I started to progress quickly, maybe even quicker than others, and, just a little, my ego started to take shape.

"I'D BEEN DEALT ONE OF THE GREATEST LIFE LESSONS I COULD HAVE HOPED FOR: EGO IS THE ENEMY AND THERE IS ALWAYS GOING TO BE SOMEONE BETTER THAN YOU"

In the build up to my first competition, I remember my coach saying, "man, if you fight like you do in the academy at the tournament this weekend, you're going to win." Ego now in full flow, I felt like I was set to be a jiu jitsu superstar and I would be bringing home gold medals on the regular. Yeah…

So I didn't win my first tournament, and I was genuinely surprised. It turned out I wasn't the jiu jitsu badass I was supposed to be. Unbeknown to me at the time, I'd been dealt one of the greatest life lessons I could have hoped for: ego is the enemy and there is always going to be someone better than you. Roger Gracie aside, of course.

Having your ego curbed is something we have all experienced, and I believe it's one of the most amazing things jiu jitsu can teach us. After realising I wasn't set to be the next 10x world champion, it made my training much, much easier. I still trained hard, I still wanted to do well, but I now realised the importance of managing expectations and exercising humility, especially within your own academy.

Fast forward to present day, and I can hold my hands up and admit that I've still never won a tournament. Ever. Has the one thing I never wanted to happen finally happened? Am I a jiu jitsu average Joe? The answer to that is, without doubt, a categorical 'Yes'.

I could never in my wildest dreams hoped to have found something I would become so passionate about as Brazilian jiu jitsu. It's what I think about 99% of the day, and that's not just because I'm a journalist actively seeking jiu jitsu stimulus 24/7. Back when I was working in 'the real world', I would often have colleagues tell me to shut up talking about 'that cuddling s***', or get in trouble for watching too many videos of fights on YouTube. Despite being so hopelessly in love with BJJ, I will never be a world champion and, let's face it, I may never win a gold medal. I would hazard a guess that I am the epitome of a jiu jitsu average Joe, but guess what? I'm ok with that.

Life can be a tricky balancing act. You could argue that anyone who truly excels at something cannot be a balanced person because of the amount of time required to achieve said excellence. Now I don't subscribe to that theory myself, but I do believe that life has a sneaky habit of taking over. After finishing my studies and getting a job, guess what? I couldn't train as intensely as I did before and my commitments meant I couldn't be at the academy for every session of the week. I saw the guys putting in the extra hours start to progress quicker than me, then surpass me, and once again I had to work hard to keep my ego in check.

For me, a good week of training is if I can get to the academy three times. Now that's a 'good' week, and sadly quite often it's less than that, but either way it's not the six, seven or eight sessions the 'medal chasers' are putting in. On rare occasions, I can have weeks when I can't make it to the academy at all, and there's no denying I miss training terribly when that happens. But, you know what, I don't think I would want to be the guy that's at the gym eight times a week anymore – is that ok to say?

As long as I get my weekly jiu jitsu fix, I'm a happy man, and that's my relationship with the art. It's still my passion and I'd be lost without it, but I'm comfy calling myself an average Joe. I'm just a guy doing jiu jitsu. I love BJJ and I love martial arts, but I also enjoy the occasional beer, going out for dinner with friends, heading to the cinema with my wife and taking the dog for a walk - life is a rich tapestry.

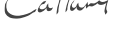
All that said, hold your horses a minute, as I think I've found a loophole! I may be a jiu jitsu average Joe, but what does that mean on a grander scale?

It takes a very special type of person to train BJJ for the long haul. How many people have you seen rock up for one or two classes, possibly people with previous martial arts experience, before quitting for something easier or less challenging? Simply getting your blue belt in jiu jitsu should be considered a massive, massive achievement, and something that only a small percentage of the world's population have the bottle to pursue.

Many of you reading this will hopefully relate to my plight and would consider yourselves jiu jitsu average Joes - embrace it! If we're average Joes in the jiu jitsu world, how does that compare to those in the general population who don't have any competence in jiu jitsu and self defence? We grapplers are gods amongst mere mortals!

Just kidding. Sort of.

Thanks for picking up our latest issue and I hope you enjoy it.



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IT'S SCIENCE

BY TYLER BISHOP

FERNANDO 'TERERE' AUGUSTO

FERNANDO 'TERERE' IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR JIU JITSU PRACTITIONERS TO HAVE EVER STEPPED ONTO THE MAT. HAVING BEEN CROWNED A BLACK BELT WORLD CHAMPION AT THE AGE OF 20, TERERE WAS KNOWN FOR HIS MODERN GAME DURING THE 2000'S, AND FOR COACHING NOTABLE ATHLETES SUCH AS ANDRE GALVAO, RUBENS CHARLES AND MICHAEL LANGHI.

CHOKES FROM THE BACK ACCOUNTED FOR 66% OF ALL OF TERERE'S SUBMISSION VICTORIES

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THE SCIENCE OF JIU JITSU

'It's Science' is brought to you by BishopBjj.com. The goal of BishopBjj.com is to expand and empower the jiu jitsu community by emphasising the science and art of jiu jitsu in fun and exciting ways. We want to highlight what makes jiu jitsu so calculated, but also what makes it so much fun.

100%

OF TERERE'S WINS SAW HIM SCORE FIRST

65% OF TERERE'S GUARD PASSES WERE LEG WEAVES OR X-PASSES

93%

OF TERERE'S MATCHES ENDED WITH THE VICTORY

64%

OF HIS WINS ENDED WITH A SUBMISSION

6.30 MINUTES

AVERAGE MATCH LENGTH

47%

OF TERERE'S PASSES CAME FROM STANDING

TOTAL MATCHES OBSERVED	15
TOTAL MINUTES OBSERVED	97
MATCHES WON BY SUBMISSION	09
MATCHES WON BY POINTS	05
OPPONENT WON MATCH	01
TOTAL MATCHES WON	14

ABSTRACT:

All matches observed of Fernando Terere used in this small sample occurred at major jiu jitsu events in the years 2001-2016. Only techniques, occurrences, and outcomes that were recorded are displayed in the data below (i.e. if no butterfly sweeps occurred, there will not be a representation of that in the sample data charts). Matches were selected at random based on freely available matches. This is a limited sample but – given the estimated number of matches in this time period – it is well above the percentage necessary to create a scientifically validated trend sampling.

THE BREAKDOWN

Fernando Terere is considered a living legend in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. There was an era in which he was considered invincible, followed by an era in which he battled his own personal demons. With over a decade passing since he first burst onto the scene as one of the most feared competitors in the game, Terere is competing once again, which has us looking back on what made him so successful all those years ago.

THE STUDY

Terere can perhaps be considered the father of many of the modern jiu jitsu styles and techniques that we see in competition today. His style of passing and guard play were passed down to many of his top students, who now dominate the tournament scene, including Andre Galvao, Cobrinha, and many others.

As we began our study we were surprised at just how much Terere's game matched many of the modern passing styles that people like Andre Galvao are using today (with very little variation). Additionally, as forward-thinking as Terere's jiu jitsu was, we can see a pure simplicity in how he finished many of his matches.

Terere is known for his dynamic take downs and passing game, and for good reason. He made approximately 17 guard passes in 15 matches. That means he averaged more than one guard pass per match in our study. This is one of the highest percentages we've seen.

You could argue that his passing average could have been even higher if it wasn't for the fact that he very often took his opponent's back off of guard passes. He took his opponent's back off a guard pass in 33% of the matches we watched.

As we quickly found out from observing Terere, his back takes were almost always a match ender. He finished his opponents from their back in 40% of the matches we observed.

Returning to our original point, Terere's passing game is deadly for two reasons. The first is that — on average — he passes the guard +1 times per match, and in nearly 1/3 of his matches he took his opponents back off of a guard pass. So, if you're competing against Fernando Terere, it is statistically probable he will pass your guard and also likely that he will take your back off of the pass, and choke you.

There were really two different sweeps, which Terere blended together well, that led to his unique success. The first was the X-pass and its variations, which include instances in which he'd make a low trouser grip on the opposite leg. The second was a leg weave pass. These two types of passes accounted for approximately 65% of all of Terere's guard passes.

Fernando Terere is one of the greatest competitors of all time. His recent return to competition marks a bright spot for jiu jitsu; one its most exciting athletes has returned from a dark layoff. No one knows what the future holds for Terere but it's evident to anyone paying attention that he has already left his mark on history.

SWEEP (POSITION)

DE LA RIVA	2
SPIDER GUARD	1
X GUARD	1
BUTTERFLY GUARD	2

SWEEP (TYPE)

X-GUARD	1
TOMANAGI	2
HOOK	2
COLLAR DRAG / ARM DRAG	1

PASS (POSITION)

ON KNEES	8
HALF GUARD	1
STANDING	8

PASS (TYPE)

LEG DRAG	2
X-PASS	5
BULLFIGHTER	2
BUTTERFLY (PIN LEG, JUMPING BACK STEP)	2
LEG-WEAVE	6

TAKING THE BACK

SIDE CONTROL	2
TURTLE	1
FROM PASSING THE GUARD	5

SUBMISSION (POSITION)

BACK	6
SIDE CONTROL	1
MOUNT	1
OPEN GUARD	1

SUBMISSION (TYPE)

CHOKE FROM BACK	6
ARMBAR	1
TRIANGLE	2

SUMMARY

SUCCESSES: LONG STEP AND BACK CHOKES

AVOIDED: HALF GUARD BOTTOM, HALF GUARD TOP

TOP TECHNIQUES: LONG STEP & LEG DRAG PASS

HISTORY 101:
SERRA BJJ

Matt Serra was born on the 2nd June 1974 in East Meadow, within the state of New York. He had always been keen on martial arts, idolising Bruce Lee. Serra remembered in an interview on the Renzo Gracie Academy YouTube channel that "other kids were playing little league, my father had me watching Kung Fu Theatre." He took up wing chun, getting extra practice at home on the wooden dummy in their garage. Although Serra trained in kung fu, grappling came naturally to him, particularly once he had a few years of wrestling under his belt. Wing chun training went out the window when Serra found himself in a real fight. "I'd start with a straight blast chain punch, then ended up just doing a double leg."

Not one for academia, Serra had planned for a career in the military. That plan was cut short by an altercation that left him with a criminal record, meaning the seventeen year-old Serra needed another option.

He summarised the story in an interview with MMAmania.com:

"*When I was 17, I enrolled into the delayed entry program in the Marines. Well I ended up getting into a streetfight and the guy got really hurt. They charged me with a felony but I ended up pleading guilty to a misdemeanor. After that the Marines didn't accept me, I couldn't believe it. I didn't know what the hell I was gonna do with myself. Then my dad showed me a tape of the Gracies. It was incredible and I was just like 'man that is it, that's what I want to do.'*"

The *Gracie Jiu Jitsu in Action* tapes had a major impact on Serra. As he told the Grappling Central podcast, "I thought I was a little bad ass", but then he realised "if I ever fought one of these guys, they'd take me down and not let me up, then strangle me. It was actually scary. I never liked the idea of knowing that there were people out there that could possess that power." Fortunately for Serra, it was a power he could access, a rare privilege in the early '90s. He remembers seeing a seminar advertised for the summer of 1992, to be taught by Rorion and Royce Gracie in Waterbury, Connecticut. That was his first experience on the mat: "I just fell in love with the art, from day one."

There was a teacher within reach, closer to home. Craig Kukuk was the first American to gain a black belt in what was then known as Gracie Jiu Jitsu, earning that rank in 1992. He ran a GJJ class once a week in New York at Oishi's Judo (a venerable NY institution, founded in 1969 by art student Shiro Oishi). Although Kukuk had fallen out with Rorion, "he knew his stuff, he had very good basics, strong foundation." Serra was under Kukuk for several years, during which time another black belt became part of the gym: Renzo Gracie. The two black belts eventually parted company, but Serra stuck with Renzo. This proved to be a good decision, as Renzo would give him the opportunity that kickstarted his teaching career. Serra told MixedMartialArts.com that:

"*Without Renzo, I would never have achieved anything that I've achieved in the martial arts world. He took me under his wing. I was literally wearing a clip-on tie, working the graveyard shift, midnight until eight in the morning, in a security guard booth.*

As a twenty year old kid, he saw me and he said, 'You're rolling like shit. What's your problem?' I'm like, 'Dude, I'm tired. I'm working all night, I come here all day, and then I've got to go back to the security guard booth.' So he says, 'Forget that. Work here for me.'"

A purple belt at the time, Serra was thrilled and started the next day. He cleaned the gym, as well as teaching in the afternoon and taking private lessons. "I'd sleep over, on a cot. […] There was a VHS player, so I'd just watch tournaments from Brazil." It was 1997 and the location was known as 'The Barn', with no windows and poor ventilation.

In May 2000, Serra became the first American to receive a black belt from Renzo Gracie, ready to expand both his competitive profile and his network of schools. By 2001, the student body had outgrown The Barn, relocating to Serra's place of birth, East Meadow. A respected MMA fighter, Serra initially had other plans for his business:

"*Before I opened up, I had the Christmas cards ready, it was going to be Serra MMA. I wanted to get a broader clientele. At the last second, I threw those in the garbage and I ended up keeping it Serra BJJ. I love all martial arts, but Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is in my blood, it's what I do. […] I need to roll, I need to roll. It's my therapy.*"

Two years later, a second Serra BJJ location opened in Huntington. Eventually a new Long Island base would become the main hub for Serra BJJ, in Levittown. Meanwhile on the competition mats, from 1999 to 2001, Serra's reputation grew. He earned a gold at the Pan Ams and silver at the 2001 ADCC. In terms of grappling, this was perhaps his finest moment. Not only did he achieve a silver medal (at Renzo's request, he stepped aside for Marcio Feitosa), he beat some massive names along the way. The biggest of all was Jean Jacques Machado, who had been the heavy favourite that year.

To finish with some closing thoughts from Serra: "I knew you couldn't fight forever. I was always an equal part teacher/fighter. What I did with my schools, I gave myself a job for the next twenty years that I like to do. If I had all the money in the world, I'd be doing exactly what I'm doing right here."

TIMELINE

1992
Matt Serra attends a seminar with Rorion and Royce Gracie in Waterbury, Connecticut, then begins training with Craig Kukuk at Oishi's Judo

2000
Renzo Gracie awards Matt Serra his black belt on the 23rd May

2001
Serra defeats Jean Jacques Machado at the 2001 ADCC, ending up with a silver medal

2007
In another huge combat sports upset, Serra takes the title from Georges St-Pierre at UFC 69

SOURCES: • SERRABJJ.COM • GRAPPLINGCENTRAL.COM • BJJHEROES.COM • IN THE CLINCH WITH MATT SERRA (YOUTUBE) • MIXEDMARTIALARTS.COM • MMAMANIA.COM • RENZO GRACIE ACADEMY (YOUTUBE) • FOX FIGHT GAME INTERVIEW

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Saitama, Japan
GI

RIO DE JANEIRO
November 12 & 13, 2016
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Rio De janeiro, Brazil
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WORDS: TOM BELL
PICTURES: ANDY DOUGLAS

BEN DYSON: IN DEMAND

Ippon Gym's Ben Dyson is rapidly becoming one of the UK's most in-demand sub-only stars.

So far his resume boasts the likes of Polaris, Crest, the Newaza Challenge and the BJJ247 Elite Circuit. Following his barnstormer of a year, we learn a little more about the Jeff Lawson and Roy Dean brown belt.

Hi Ben. So, present day, we can find you at Ippon Gym in Bournemouth, but where did it all begin?
Where did it all begin? I started at a small club in Poole, it's not there anymore. The chap who ran it is now a brown belt, but was a purple belt when I first joined. He was under Roy Dean, and after only about six weeks of training I met Dean, he came over to visit the academy and eventually it turned into one of his schools. I stayed there until I got my blue belt then Jeff (Lawson) opened Ippon in Bournemouth and I went there, however I've always represented and stayed under Roy Dean and I've been backwards and forwards to America to train with him ever since.

It's no secret that Roy has an immense amount of ability and prestige in the sport, so what is it like having that trip back to America always on the horizon? Surely it adds another dimension to your motivation?
Yeah, it does, really. Roy is pretty good; even though he's a continent away he's always there to offer guidance to me if I ask or need it, and always offers encouragement. But any time I go anywhere, I want to show people I have improved. It's what I strive to do.

Let's talk about your day-to-day training at Ippon Gym, which is owned by Jeff Lawson.
Jeff does own Ippon, it's great. Jeff is obviously great and he's got a style of rolling that really complements mine because it's completely opposite. He's got lots of explosive stuff as people have probably seen (that Polaris arm bar!!). He's great to train with, he's a little smaller than me but I have a lot of awesome training partners here, from bigger lads, to smaller, like Jeff.

"I JUST HAVE THIS PREFERENCE TO GO AFTER IT AND NOT WORRY ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES TOO MUCH, OR CONTROLLING POSITIONS"

And we can find you there teaching and training as well, which is great. Let's flash back a little though - research shows you were a blue belt for just over a year. What happened in that time for the promotion to be so quick?
Man, I just absolutely got the bug! I was training at about two or three different clubs, it would be pretty much constant. I would finish one class at one gym and then go and do another class at another gym.

So, Roy came across to his club here and during the seminar I had a roll with him and he stopped me afterwards and said "Ben, you're definitely a purple belt." It was a complete shock considering I'd only been a blue belt a year or something. He gave me a purple belt after the session and I absolutely couldn't believe it.

An unexpected day at training then?
Yeah! As I'm sure you'll be aware, once you get the belt then you feel the need to prove it so you end up training harder, feeling a bit more pressure, trying to prove it to yourself and others too.

And since then you've been training so hard to the point you're probably the most in-demand brown belt in the UK. Let's look at the past twelve months:

Polaris twice, beating Travis Newaza and then losing to Tom Breese.

You won the Newaza Challenge, beating Bradley Hill and Tom Breese - Brad being Braulio's protégé, former world number one ranked brown belt, and then Tom, increasingly popular UFC prospect, former freestyle wrestling champion, Firas Zahabi brown belt and EBI competitor.

You flew over to compete in Crest, an invitational tournament in Scandinavia. You were invited to and won the BJJ247 Elite Circuit Pop Up Tournament in Birmingham. What's the secret, Ben?
It's hard, but I'd probably say the stuff I've managed to do when I've had my chances. Before Crest, I'd had ten submission-only matches and I'd won them all; I'd had some good results. The first one I ever did was against a guy called Mike Hawkins at a show called Super 15, which had some really good guys from the UK on, like Viking Wong, Bradley Hill, Jack Magee and Charles Negromonte.

So the secret would be to build a reputation, right? You get guys who have won stuff, but haven't shown submission-only appeal to a show promoter, I suppose.

Yeah. With the likes of IBJJF, yeah, you have the prestige of winning it and you can win by submission, of course, but nobody is going to pay to go and watch when there's a chance that guys could hold you down for the entire fight and win by an advantage. It's always been something I've tried to avoid doing to win a fight.

Where else have you been this year? Everywhere we turn, you're there!
I did the English Nogi at the start of the year, I had five fights and won them all. I did the Gi Europeans, the Gi Pan Ams at short notice, and then the submission-only stuff. I'm sure I'm missing a couple but, yeah, I've been busy.

The opportunities that come with submission-only shows; look at Jeff Lawson and that arm bar at Polaris - it went viral. With the broadcasting on many submission-only shows, there's a chance that you could go viral too.
Exactly. It's about making the most of opportunities that are presented to you with a view to doing the same in the future and building on that. You have to prove yourself to get further in the sub-only world. It's not a win for anybody if you go out and you fight not to get submitted. Yeah, you might not get subbed, but who's going to benefit from that? Certainly not the audience.

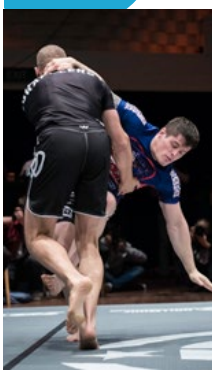
How much does picking your matches affect things, is it good or bad? Anything can happen in grappling, so a mismatch might not be such a bad thing.
I can understand, at this Polaris, they asked who I wanted to match with because Tom had let them know he wanted a re-match and I liked that. But I would have loved to fight the type of guy I wouldn't have been expected to have a chance against: a black belt. But for them, it's a different story – they have more to lose.

A lot of competitors credit competition itself with sky rocketing their jiu jitsu. You've done that and now you've built a sub-only career too, so have you noticed even further improvement in your own ability?
Yeah, I mean the thing is that rule set suits me down to the ground. I've always either won by submission or I've been submitted. I've done the likes of IBJJF and various tournaments and at brown belt I've only ever won by points in one of my victories.

It suits me perfectly. I just have this preference to go after it and not worry about the consequences too much, or controlling positions. I just want to see what happens when I go for a guy and keep developing as a grappler.

BEN DYSON

Ben is one of the UK's top submission grapplers, training out of Ippon Gym



"As I'm sure you'll be aware, once you get the belt then you feel the need to prove it so you end up training harder, feeling a bit more pressure, trying to prove it to yourself and others too"

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EDDIE BRAVO

THE RISE OF COMBAT JIU JITSU

WORDS: FELIX RODRIGUEZ PICTURES: FLAVIO SCORSATO

"TO ME, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN AN OBSESSION TO MAKE JIU JITSU AS LEGIT AS POSSIBLE"

Eddie Bravo needs no introduction in the grappling community. The man became a legend as a brown belt when he defeated Royler Gracie at ADCC. Eddie used the notoriety gained from his win over Royler to create an almost cult-like following for his 10th Planet Jiu Jitsu system. Since that improbable triangle submission win, Eddie has built a name for himself by straying from the beaten path and forging his own trail in grappling.

His 10th Planet system has garnered praise for its innovative contributions to no-gi jiu jitsu, and is also a topic of controversy amongst BJJ purists like Carlinhos Gracie and his followers. Love him or hate him, all can rest assured that Eddie is here to stay and he only plans on building his 10th Planet brand, and making its related projects bigger.

Jiu Jitsu Style caught up with 10th Planet's elder statesman to discuss his latest project. He plans to use his widely popular Eddie Bravo Invitational (EBI) events as a platform to launch Combat Jiu Jitsu (CJJ). Eddie sat with us to breakdown CJJ and explain why he believes his newest brainchild might become the next evolution in competitive grappling. Check out what he had to say!

COMBAT JIU JITSU: THE BETA STAGE

Eddie Bravo plans to innovate grappling through Combat Jiu Jitsu by allowing open hand striking to grounded opponents while grappling under his EBI event rules. Although Combat Jiu Jitsu is technically four years old, Eddie is resurrecting this project after CJJ's original iteration failed to take off in 2012.

He explained, "CJJ is not a new thing. Originally, the format you see at EBI with the shows, I wanted to do the same exact thing but have strikes on the ground. I wanted to occupy that spot right in between MMA and jiu jitsu. I just wanted to make jiu jitsu as real as can be without having to learn Muay Thai and wrestling. It's just strikes on the ground and just palm strikes. We're not trying to make it to where it's striking-dominant; the palm strikes are not going to knock out as many people as you would think. It's just to open up submissions and to keep the jiu jitsu a little more realistic."

From the start, Bravo's goal was to make CJJ as legitimate as possible. In order to gain regulation under CSAC, California's athletic commission, he had to make compromises that were ultimately incompatible with the format he envisioned.

"IT'S REALLY HARD TO TELL IF COMBAT JIU JITSU WILL FAIL OR IF IT WILL BLOW UP"

"In order to do jiu jitsu with strikes I had to go to the Commission to get everything official. They wouldn't allow CJJ on open mats, they wanted it done inside of a cage, but only because they didn't know what the hell it was. They were like, 'Wait a minute, you gotta have a cage!' I didn't want a cage because if you do Combat Jiu Jitsu in a cage it looks like pussified MMA. No one wants to see that shit, but if you put that same sport on open mats, like in Metamoris, and you add palm strikes, then the exact same sport turns into extreme jiu jitsu," noted Bravo.

Bravo wasn't happy with the product that resulted from his acquiescence to CSAC's demands, but tried to see if it would work anyway. Despite his best intentions Bravo believes the changes made by CSAC ultimately made CJJ unappealing.

"I just couldn't do it like that. We tried a couple of matches in the cage, and they wouldn't give me a ten-minute round, again, only because nobody knew what it was going to look like, so they just said 'No, we'll give you three three-minute rounds.' So, I had to do it in a cage, I had to do three three-minute rounds like they asked, and we did two Combat Jiu Jitsu matches at two separate University of MMA shows, which is an amateur promotion based here in Los Angeles," said Bravo.

Eddie Bravo will be the first to admit that tinkering with CJJ's format kept its initial iteration from taking off, but he also believes that EBI's creation and success was a by-product of CJJ's failure.

He told JJS, "We tried it twice, but you know, it just doesn't work in a cage, so I decided to do a submission only format and that's how EBI was born. Now that we have eight EBI shows in the books, I decided to poke my head back in with the Commission and see if I could do this the way I originally wanted to do it; on mats, just like you see on the EBI stage, except when one person is on the ground palm strikes are legal."

Resurrecting Combat Jiu Jitsu

The Eddie Bravo Invitational is quickly becoming one of the more popular grappling events being broadcasted today. EBI features top-level no-gi athletes competing under an innovative set of rules designed to push for a finish. If regular time runs out, EBI competitors go to a unique overtime setting where they take turns in a sudden death type format attacking from the back or spider web for three rounds until there is a submission. If there isn't one, the person with the most escapes is ruled the victor.

"We're doing one submission-only 16-man tournament per show with the EBI overtime rounds, we're really the only ones doing it like that. Really what sets us apart is the format with the overtime rounds," said Bravo.

Bravo has put on eight successful EBI events so far, with EBI 9 and EBI 10 scheduled for November and December of 2016. Now that he has CSAC's full support, and EBI has become a well-oiled machine with an established viewership to help promote CJJ, he believes the timing is right to bring it back from the ashes.

"The commission agreed to let me do it my way. They said they wanted to do it and the first show, which will feature a four-man tournament, is going to be some time in February of 2017. I haven't quite nailed down the date, but it's going to be integrated into the Welterweight Tournament, which is the division that Garry Tonon is the champion in right now.

"So it's going to be a regular 16-man tournament with Garry Tonon in February of 2017 with the Combat Jiu Jitsu tournament as well. So far we've locked down one fighter for sure, it will be featuring one of my brown belts, a guy named JM Hollan; he's one of the head instructors at 10th Planet Bethlehem and he'll be one of the four 135lb fighters competing. I'm working on getting the other guys confirmed to compete against him as soon as possible," said Bravo.

Eddie wants CJJ to start small and grow organically by piggybacking on the popularity of his submission-only grappling tournaments. He isn't in a rush because he wants CJJ to become an official sport, regulated like MMA, and he thinks he understands what is needed for CJJ to take off this second time around.

He told JJS, "When we did CJJ at University of MMA shows, we had to wear gloves in a cage. Now we won't have them anymore, so the open palm strikes will be barehanded and they compete on mats. Another new thing is that if a fight goes into overtime, then it will be with regular EBI rules without any striking. There won't be judges, and the overtime rules will be exactly the same as in the grappling format. I'm excited, but we don't know what's gonna happen. Maybe, who knows, maybe Combat Jiu Jitsu looks like shit, and it's really not entertaining, so we end up just pulling it, or it becomes more exciting than the regular submission only rules and EBI starts to look a little weird without the palm strikes after a while.

"It's really hard to tell if it's going to fail or if it's going to blow up. We may tweak it, pull it, or we can just keep it the way it is, having a 16-man tournament submission-only with a four-man Combat Jiu Jitsu tournament; maybe that is the winning combo. Honestly, I don't know. I'm not sure how it's going to look, but we're going to find out."

The Motivation Behind Combat Jiu Jitsu

Incorporating palm strikes into Combat Jiu Jitsu's format is intriguing to say the least. The combination of grounded strikes and grappling

"10TH PLANET HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT DEVELOPING JIU JITSU USING A CLINCHING STYLE FOR WHEN STRIKES ARE INVOLVED, AND OF COURSE WITHOUT THE GI"

"LIKE I SAID BEFORE, I DON'T THINK THERE'S GOING TO BE TOO MANY KNOCKOUTS, I THINK IT'S JUST GOING TO MAKE THE SUBMISSIONS INCREASE"

have made CJJ a hybrid form of combat sports that is not quite jiu jitsu and not quite MMA. Eddie Bravo has created an autonomous sport.

Discussing his motivation behind CJJ Bravo noted, "I'm just trying to promote jiu jitsu. I've been the biggest jiu jitsu fan my whole life. I was one of those guys that would tattoo the Brazilian flag on their back, you know what I mean? I was one of those guys who, no matter who was fighting, if a Brazilian was fighting someone from my hometown I would go for the Brazilian. That's how much I was into jiu jitsu. I was obsessed with it.

"To me, it's always been an obsession to make jiu jitsu as legit as possible, as realistic as I can. MMA, that's way more realistic, but at least with Combat Jiu Jitsu, grappling will be a little bit more realistic in a self defence type of way. The reason we're doing this is to find out what really works, and keep our jiu jitsu as real as possible without having to learn Muay Thai and wrestling. MMA is the best test for what works, that's the test right there. Why? Because you can do unlimited strikes, you can do elbows, punch, kick, knee; you can really open things up like in no other format.

"In Combat Jiu Jitsu you can only use your hands, and it's just your palms, for striking, so although Combat Jiu Jitsu won't prepare you for a career in MMA like actually training in all of the disciplines involved in MMA would, it surely will prepare you for the grappling side of MMA much better than if you only grappled with the gi."

Whether the format takes off or not remains to be seen, but Bravo is committed to help CJJ take off as a legitimate sport that will appeal to different types of competitors, not necessarily just submission grapplers.

He noted, "I think, so far, we are only officially regulated under California's commission. We have an individual category regulated under combat sports in California, wins and losses are counted for Combat Jiu Jitsu just like the fight record for an amateur boxer or mixed martial artist in the state. It's pretty cool we have started a whole new thing that's a whole separate sport for three kinds of people.

"It's for jiu jitsu guys and wrestlers that eventually want to get into MMA, but maybe they're not working on their striking as much right now; I think that type of grappler would be interested in this format. Grapplers that have done MMA and have done 20 or 30 fights and they've realised that the fighting is too much or the gold isn't there at the end of the rainbow, for whatever reason that they want to step back from MMA, but not fully retire from fighting, Combat Jiu Jitsu is perfect for them as well.

"Then the third types are people who don't want to do MMA at all, who want to do Combat Jiu Jitsu just to say that they did the most extreme form of jiu jitsu available in competition format."

The Genius of Palm Strikes

Combining open handed striking and jiu jitsu is a risky move with unlimited possibilities. By incorporating palm strikes into grappling Eddie hopes to trigger a change in the way athletes grapple. He believes palm strikes will make watching grappling more viewer-friendly because striking will force opponents who are stalling to try and advance positions.

"Killing stalling and making jiu jitsu more fan-friendly is exactly what I'm trying to do. Not only are the palm strikes going to make jiu jitsu a little more realistic in the sport aspect, but it's also going to open up submissions," said Bravo. According to Bravo, CJJ's format may trigger a renaissance of classic grappling positions that have a high finishing ratio and help weed out ineffective techniques.

"By adding striking we're going to get a lot more submissions from the mount and back. In Combat Jiu Jitsu, when you get to the back you can do strikes to the side of the face, and you add that component then that's different. I really think the mount and the back are going to make a strong comeback in a real big way. The mount without punches is way different than the mount with punches; it's a whole different ball game. Once you get to the mount, oh man, that's the real game changer!

"People are gonna want to get to the mat more, and the mount will become the spot it's always been – meaning, where everything comes from, that's the launching pad generally speaking of course. You get to the mount and you start throwing punches, then the guy is going to give his back or an arm so that's the spot right there. Palm strikes in the mount, that's going to change EBI. Another position I think we'll be seeing coming back is the full guard. Other guards like the open guards, you can get smacked from there, and the smacks are going to change up those positions quick, so to prevent the smacking I think we'll be seeing a lot more of the full guard to control opponents.

"We've been experimenting with different things, like sitting guard; you can sit all day. If someone is in sitting guard and he has his hands up protecting his face, when the opponent starts swinging, trying to smack you, then you just clinch him and work your pathways to a submission. Like I said before, I don't think there's going to be too many knockouts, I think it's just going to make the submissions increase."

Although Eddie believes palm strikes will help change how grapplers compete, he thinks leg locks will remain unaffected by the addition of palm strikes.

He explained, "I don't think palm strikes will change the leg lock game that much, to be honest with you. I think people are still going to be getting leg locked because palm strikes won't affect them that much. If anything, they'll make you go to your locks quicker and with more authority. You know, because with leg locks, even with strikes on the ground, guys like Eddie Cummings are still going to be leg-locking people if they decide to do this.

"I think that everything you see lately in EBI, most of it is going after legs in this era of EBI. I think people will be fine in Combat Jiu Jitsu going for leg attacks, even with palm strikes. I don't think there will be that much more of a difference; it's just going to force you to make decisions quicker, and get to the safe spots quicker. There's not going to be that much lollygagging, I don't think it's going to change the leg lock game that much. People will still be getting leg-locked even with the palm strikes, just like they do in MMA."

Bringing Grappling Back to its Self-Defence Roots

One of the reasons Eddie Bravo has been a polarizing figure in the BJJ community is because of his outspoken beliefs about the effectiveness of training in the gi. Traditionalists have publicly stated that they are not fans of 10th Planet's unorthodox system. Carlos Gracie Jr. has been one of Bravo's biggest critics because he believes Bravo's views directly contradict the traditional system and structure developed by his family for Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. The irony in these criticisms is that Eddie Bravo might have found a way to bring jiu jitsu back to its self-defence roots by incorporating striking into CJJ.

Whether or not CJJ's format becomes the game changer it has the potential to be remains to be seen, but Bravo cannot wait to see how his 10th Planet system measures up against grappling with palm striking.

He noted, "10th Planet has always been about developing jiu jitsu using a clinching style for when strikes are involved, and of course without the gi. Most of our style is set off from clinching, moving with the clinch, defending in the clinch, because to me, everything is about the clinch. I just want to clinch on you because if I'm clinched then you can't hit me, and I need that clinch for offence as well, so if you can't hit me and I have a set-up for my offence then I've killed two birds with one stone.

"So I defined all the clinches, started naming all the clinches and started finding pathways with all the clinches, and that's really what the 10th Planet style is all about. I think all associations are probably thinking the same way, trying to make their jiu jitsu as legit as possible, as real as possible, and I think everyone is doing that: I know I'm doing that," noted Bravo.

Growing the 10th Planet Brand

Eddie Bravo has turned 10th Planet Jiu Jitsu into one of no-gi grappling's most recognisable names. EBI and CJJ are platforms for his students to continue testing 10th Planet's effectiveness, and Eddie has a whole new crop of disciples ready to make names for themselves.

"As far as brown belts go, we've got a lot of big names coming from 10th Planet. We have a guy named PJ Marsh, you're going to hear about him; he's going to be a big force in the jiu jitsu and sub-only communities. We have a guy named Marvin Castel, he's one of my brown belts here at 10th Planet HQ, that guy, you'll for sure hear about him. He just tapped out a Drysdale black belt at Fight to Win, like in 20 seconds.

"Also, we've got Andrew Alexander, who is a brown belt and head instructor out of 10th Planet Grants Pass; that guy is a leg lock wizard. All these guys that I'm talking about are really good at leg locks, the new crop of 10th Planet guys are coming up with all of our 10th Planet fundamentals plus super charged on leg locks. Those guys, then guys like Nathan Orchard, who is going up against Imanari in Polaris, Richie and Geo Martinez; what can you say about Geo? I mean that guy is a true freak, he is legit as f***.

"We're just starting man; honestly, we're just starting. Give me another three-five years with the leg locks and then you'll see. We have to catch up. The Danaher Death Squad and their leg lock game is the peak. All his guys and all the systems that they're doing are working because all their guys are really, really good so we're just playing catch-up. We're chasing them and we're pursuing them. Whether we catch them or not is to be seen, but we're getting better than ever so it's all good."

Promoting grappling events like EBI is smart business for Eddie because he believes that putting on a quality show is a great way to showcase the grappling system he developed, and ultimately this leads to helping grow the art of jiu jitsu.

Bravo noted on the importance of promoting grappling events, "When I'm putting on a jiu jitsu event I'm still doing the same thing and, of course, I'm making money, but it's in a way promoting something that I believe in. The same thing that comes out of 10th Planet is what comes out of EBI, it's a system and a format that promote the most effective jiu jitsu and they complement each other.

"If I put out a jiu jitsu show that is points based and with the gi because of money, you know, because everybody loves the gi and that's where the money is at. If I started doing that I'd be selling out, but I'm not doing that, I'm sticking to my guns. I don't require my athletes to sell tickets at all. I'm not into that at all.

"I grew up in the music business in Southern California where we had to pay to play, you know? People used to think it was a big deal to play the Whiskey or The Roxy, but anybody could play those gigs. All you had to do was promise to sell 40 tickets, and that's what we did just to be able to say that we played at The Whiskey or The Roxy. That [promoting model] sucks and I hate that shit. What that does is take the work out of the promoter's hands; promoters should be selling the show, not the competitors! I understand the importance of selling tickets, I get it, and some people like to go that route, but that's just not me at all so I'm not going to do that."

Bravo's goal is to help make jiu jitsu more effective while growing his brand of grappling. Combat Jiu Jitsu is the newest platform he has developed for his students to test out the 10th Planet System and he hopes that CJJ grows organically along with EBI.

"With Combat Jiu Jitsu we're just going to take it day-by-day, same as we've taken EBI, day-by-day and show-by-show. We're not really thinking too far ahead, we're just thinking about the next show. EBI 9 is Sunday November 6th and EBI 10 is the following Month in Mexico City, where Geo Martinez, the bantamweight champion, returns to defend his title against Eddie Cummings, who is coming down to the 135lb division because he wants that belt so the Danaher Death Squad can have all the EBI belts. Can they do it? I don't know, but we'll find out December 6th at EBI 10 so tune in on UFC Fight Pass," said Bravo.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR EDDIE BRAVO

Combat Jiu Jitsu's hybrid mixture of palm striking and grappling has the potential to help make grappling more viewer-friendly by killing stalling and opening up more submissions. Make sure to tune in to The Eddie Bravo Invitational for the debut of Combat Jiu Jitsu in February of 2017!

We asked Eddie if he had any final thoughts for JJS' readers and he had the following to say, "To finish the year I'll be working on EBI 9 and EBI 10, I'll be teaching seminars in Minneapolis in November and Texas in December, I'll be teaching at 10th Planet HQ here in Los Angeles, and as always, I continue to produce music. I just put out a new song with my band, Smoke Serpent, and I'm putting out a new music video on my YouTube Channel with my remix project, Hook Thieves. I produce for both these bands, Hook Thieves is similar music, but with different rappers.

If you'd like to learn the 10th Planet system online go to www.10thplanetjj.com and subscribe to Mastering the System. I have 111 episodes up, over 100 hours of Jiu Jitsu tutorials for five bucks a month.

"WE'RE (10TH PLANET) JUST STARTING MAN; HONESTLY, WE'RE JUST STARTING. GIVE ME ANOTHER THREE-FIVE YEARS WITH THE LEG LOCKS AND THEN YOU'LL SEE"

DILLON DANIS

DILLON DANIS IS JUST 23 YEARS-OLD, BUT A 10-MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH HIM IS ALL YOU NEED TO REALISE THAT HIS TALENT, DEDICATION, CONFIDENCE AND – DARE WE SAY IT – SHOWMANSHIP, FAR EXCEED HIS YEARS. I GUESS THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOUR COACH IS A JIU JITSU GOD AND YOUR MAIN SPARRING PARTNER IS THE MOST FAMOUS FIGHTER IN THE WORLD.

WORDS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT PICTURES: ANDY DOUGLAS

THEY DON'T WANT THIS LIFE

Danis has seen his profile skyrocket over the past twelve months, thanks in no small part to his involvement with Conor McGregor and the mainstream media circus that comes with the territory. However, for jiu jitsu enthusiasts, Danis is a name that has been resonating for quite some time, having picked up pretty much every medal possible as a brown belt before mixing it with the elite at faixa preta.

Gold at the 2016 Nogi Pan Ams in his division, as well as closing out the absolute final with teammate Jon Satava, saw Dillon's black belt career start to really take shape. The Marcelo Garcia protégé was also in sensational form at Polaris Pro 4 in the UK, where he submitted the equally talented (but much heavier) Jackson Sousa via heel hook.

Now, finally looking fit and healthy after a run of injuries and with confidence at an all-time high, it's hard to picture the weak, frail kid that was Dillon Danis growing up.

"When I was in middle school there was a kid that, I don't know if he was picking on me, but he just wanted to fight me for some reason," says Danis on tough times as a youngster. "He kept saying stuff and I didn't back down; it was kind of like a movie with all these other kids making a circle and loads of kids from high school came over to watch while we were fighting – it was the craziest thing ever.

"So back then I had a best friend who was a wrestler, and I remember asking him, "if I get into a fight, what should I do?" He just said, "take him down and choke him or something." So when I fought this kid, I bundled him to the ground and choked him, like, with a rear naked choke that just sort of came on naturally. Everyone watching was like, "what the f*** was that? You have to hit him!" So we fought straight away again, this time I took him down and started to punch him in the back of the head, so my hands were swollen for days after that (laughs). Anyway, I tried to walk off and all his friends threw my book back in the mud and were just giving me s***.

"I thought it was all over, but the kid I fought was very popular and I started to get messages on MySpace, which was popular back then, saying I was going to get jumped and s*** like that. They would wait for me while I was trying to get the bus home and not let me get on the bus, they started trying to fight me and I started freaking out after a while thinking I need to learn how to fight properly."

Though initially seeking out martial arts in order to protect himself at school, Dillon realised from an unusually early age that he craved the life of a fighter more than anything. As a fresh-faced teenager, it would take unflappable confidence and plenty of heart to march into an MMA school, especially close to ten years ago. But, for Dillon, they couldn't let him through the door quickly enough.

"A group of us bootlegged a copy of a UFC show, I think it was the one where GSP fought Matt Serra, the second time, and GSP just took him down and beat him up," says Dillon on discovering mixed martial arts. "I realised that's what I wanted to learn, as it seemed like the best way to approach martial arts. After that I saw an advert for an MMA school near me and I went down to take a class.

"MY STYLE IS PERFECT FOR MMA, AND I'M EXCITED TO SHOW THE PEOPLE AT SOME STAGE. SPARRING WITH THE BEST FIGHTER IN THE WORLD IS ONLY GOING TO MAKE ME BETTER"

"It was really rough when I first started out man, I was the only 15 or 16 year-old kid training with a bunch of men. I'm very competitive, so I would be wanting to tap the guys but end up going home crying because I'd been beaten up. I remember going there every day and, even if I was getting something to work in training, I would feel like they were letting me, you know? I used to just think, "what the f*** is this?" In the end I kept persevering. My mom had my back and my instructor was really good, so it kind of worked out."

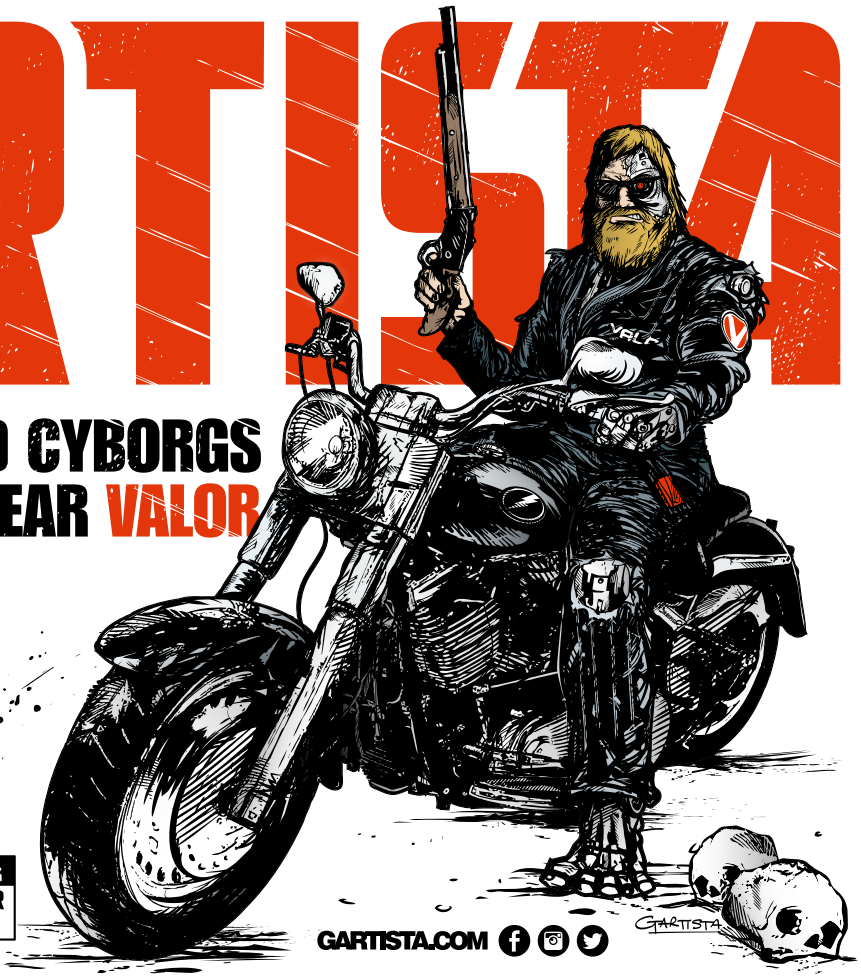
As with anyone who discovers a new passion, Dillon was completely absorbed by jiu jitsu in particular, and started to absorb techniques like a sponge. As he got better, his competitive nature developed, but his ego was kept in check by the larger, older and more experienced athletes at his academy. It wasn't long before Danis was ONLY thinking about jiu jitsu, and life at school continued to be a struggle.

"It was all I really had, to be honest," Dillon explains in reflection. "I hated school, I was never good, so I would turn up and all I would do would be to think about training. I used to go and print out moves and build them up in this folder

GARTISTA

GRAPPLING DEMIGOD CYBORGS FROM THE FUTURE WEAR VALOR AND RIDE HARLEYS!

Art By GARTISTA



VALOR
MADE FOR THE MAT

VALOR MADE FOR THE MAT.

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of techniques I'd carry around with me. I still have that folder actually, but I used to just take it around with me at school and read that instead of paying any attention in class.

"When I started, I couldn't even do one push up. I was so weak, and then I started to get stronger, better technique and I would turn up to train and get the better of guys. After a while, maybe because I was still only sixteen and getting pretty good, some of the guys would start to get a little rougher on me and hold submissions on me and s***. But, you know, I kind of liked it. Stuff like that makes you tougher and it's made me who I am today."

It wasn't long before Dillon was set to face another hurdle in his young jiu jitsu journey, as a shortage of training partners in the regular classes started to emerge:

"I ended up training in the pro MMA class after a while, because the jiu jitsu class was mainly just hobbyists, not people who wanted to be world champions, you know? So sparring in the MMA class would be wrestling on the feet and punches on the ground. The only reason I did it was because I needed that higher level of training.

"I remember once I was rolling with this really good MMA fighter, I won't say his name, but he was 'the guy' at the gym, and I caught him with something. The next roll he got me in an arm triangle and he just kept holding it when I was tapping to try and put me to sleep. But like I say, that sort of stuff just seemed to put fire in my belly.

"Another time I was training with Ricco Rodriguez and it got really bad. I actually just saw him recently and he remembered me, he said, "I don't get tapped often, but I remember you." I was sat with one of my buddies at the time who didn't believe me when I said I'd tapped Ricco, so it was kind of like that movie *Big Fish* when Ricco is there saying he remembers me doing it (laughs). It's crazy that Rico remembered everything, the exact submission I caught him with. He's a cool guy though, man."

Though it's something all parents hope for, direction is a rare quality in kids finishing up at high school. Dillon wasn't interested in education, he wasn't interested in getting a job, but he certainly had direction – he was going to become a black belt world champion. In order to continue developing and for the best possible shot at achieving his dreams, Danis knew he needed to re-evaluate where he chose to train.

"THE WAY I FIGHT, I WANT GUYS TO COME AWAY FROM IT AND NEVER WANT TO FIGHT ME AGAIN. I PUT A HIGH PACE ON, PUSH ALL THE TIME AND JUST MAKE THEM GIVE UP"

"I moved for a lot of reasons really," says Danis on training at Marcelo Garcia's academy. "I guess I became a big fish in a small pond, and it sort of got to the stage where no one wanted to train with me, so that started to make jiu jitsu not fun for me. If guys did want to roll with me, they'd spend the whole round sort of disengaging.

"The first time I went to Marcelo's he was training with Ryan Hall and there was a bunch of other high level guys on the mat. I said to myself, "this is where I need to be", because I just wanted to go hard. I just needed to be training hard and getting better.

"Marcelo took me under his wing, which is something he did with all the guys that turned up and showed commitment. He was super tough on me – if he believes you've got potential to do well, he's super tough on you. He makes sure you train every hard round, every day and sets a very high standard. He's there every day and to be able to train with my idol is amazing, as I now have him as like a dad. He trains every class, he still shows great commitment and he's won everything I want to win, so there's no better motivation for me."

Leaving school to pursue a career in martial arts is not generally considered a wise move amongst parents. After all, where's the career progression or safety net for a person whose chosen vocation is fighting? Luckily for Danis, his mother realised her son's unshakable desire and focus, choosing to support his choices instead of hinder them.

"My mom really helped me out," explains Dillon. "She got me a membership for the train to get to the city, so I'd finish school and then ride the train to Marcelo's academy after school. I'd do a double class at Marcelo's then get a late train home. I tried to go as much as I could, but it got really hard to manage, so after I graduated high school I moved to the city so I could train there full time.

"In the beginning it was very hard financially. My mom was so, so supportive though. I was never going to go to college, and I knew 100% jiu jitsu was what I wanted to do and it was what made me happy. I didn't care what it meant; if it meant I was going to be poor, if I had to sleep on the mats forever, whatever, it was what I wanted and my mom helped me get started when she saw how serious I was. I'm lucky she believed in me, because all my teachers at school were telling her to get me to college. It's funny though, because I think people at school though I was stupid, but it was just that I hated school. I was getting good at what I wanted to be good at, you know what I mean?"

Training alongside one of the greatest jiu jitsu fighters ever, surrounded by like-minded athletes and with the support of his loving family, Danis was finally in the place he wanted to be. And, guess what? Success started to follow. Career highlights must be reserved for Dillon's run at brown belt, which saw him pick up pretty much every major IBJJF title in emphatic style.

"At brown belt I won every tournament I entered and was tapping some of the best guys out there," beams Dillon. One of the guys I tapped at brown belt just won the Worlds at black belt, so I was really pushing it at brown belt. I've had a tough time for a while with injuries and stuff, but I know that I will get back to where I want to be. I don't feel like I've achieved anything yet – the best is yet to come."

Dillon wasn't just making a name for himself as a successful fighter, but for his style of fighting. He forces a frantic pace, always pushes forward and always looks for the submission, which further cemented his appeal with fans and drew comparisons with his coach, Marcelo.

"I try and take a lot from Marcelo's style, as I like to go straight forward, push hard and look for submissions," explains Dillon. "Plus he doesn't do strength and conditioning, so that's another plus for me (laughs).

"The way I fight, I want guys to come away from it and never want to fight me again. I put a high pace on, push all the time and just make them give up. That was kind of my thing at brown belt, I would just say to myself, "keep pushing until this guy quits."

"THERE'S A LOT OF OPTIONS ON THE TABLE ALREADY FOR BIG MMA PROMOTIONS. IF I WANTED TO TAKE IT NOW, I COULD, BUT I'M WEIGHING-UP MY OPTIONS AND I FEEL LIKE THERE'S PLENTY FOR ME TO ACHIEVE IN JIU JITSU AS WELL"

As his reputation grew and medals continued to pile up, Danis found himself being approached by Ralek Gracie and Metamoris. In fact, he was one of the first guys to sign an exclusive contract with the promotion, making him an official Metamoris fighter. Though Danis did showcase his skills via a RNC finish over Joe Lauzon at Metamoris 6, Metamoris and their exclusive contracts never took hold, and the promotion has struggled to the point of virtual non-existence at the present time.

"It was a mess," says Dillon on his time with Metamoris. "But, I can honestly say I never had anything bad to say about Ralek. He was super cool and he did pay me for my fight, even though I know a lot of people didn't get paid. I wish him the best – sometimes when you strive so high, things can go wrong. I mean, I don't know anything about the website taking money, but obviously that's f***ed up if that is true. I hope he does manage turn it around though, as I think he was on the right path, as the show was great."

Now a black belt, there's no denying that Danis has developed a style of grappling that is perhaps perfectly suited for mixed martial arts, and it comes as no surprise to hear that he sees the sport in his future.

"My goals have always been the same, and I always wanted to do MMA," states Dillon. "Training with Conor (McGregor) has maybe brought it out of me more and made me think about the timing, but it was always going to happen. I still want to win the black belt Worlds and stuff like that, but so many opportunities are coming up with MMA for me now that I may just have to get in there and shut everybody up. There's a lot of doubters.

"Every MMA and jiu jitsu fighter seems to want to fight me right now for some reason. I've not even fought MMA yet, and there's a line of MMA fighters trying to call me out. I think it's a good thing. Lots of these guys are all talk. If I see them in person and walk past them, they put their head down and don't want to look me in the eye. If you say something online, you should be able to say it to their face.

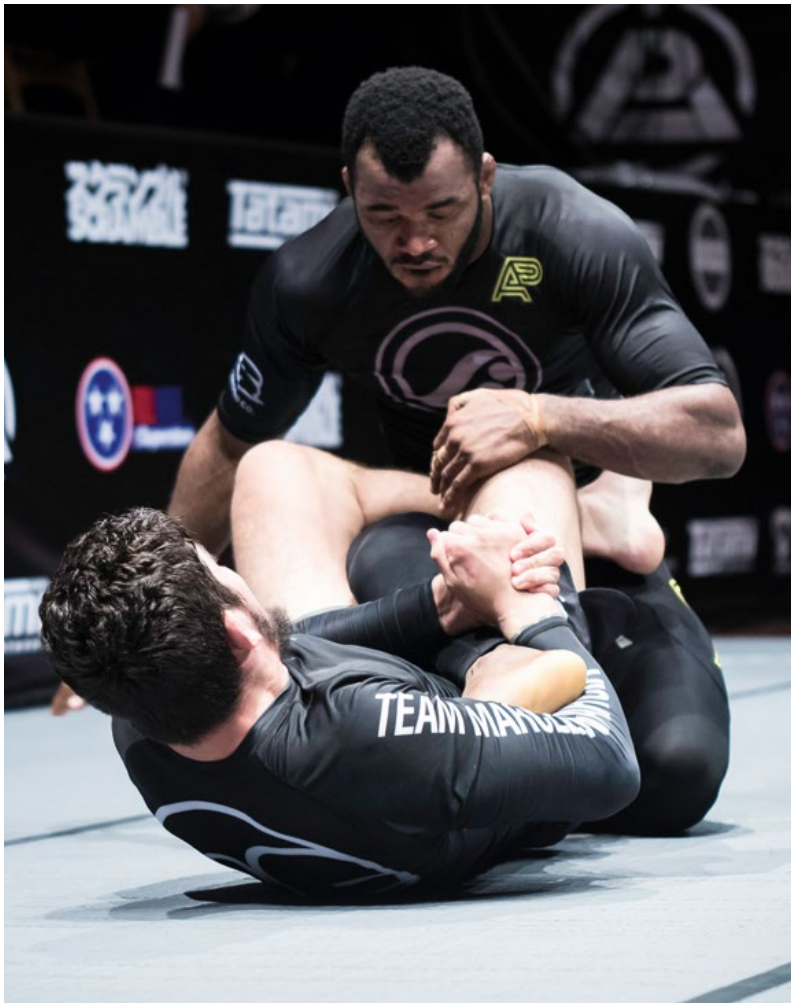
"Winners focus on winning and losers focus on winners. There are a lot of guys focused on me and I'm just focused on my next goal."

Conor McGregor is, without doubt, the highest profile mixed martial artist in the world, and Dillon's profile has exploded through pure association. But, when it comes down to business, it's not a one-way street, with Conor gaining access to one of the best grapplers in the world, and Danis learning his craft as a mixed martial artist.

"It's kind of hard to explain how it happened, but it just happened," says Danis on meeting McGregor. "I help him, he helps me, and now we are good friends as well as training partners. People don't really see it because it's behind the scenes, but he has my back as much as I have his. He knows I'm here to help him and we really click off the mat, as we share a lot of the same mind-set. I love the way he thinks. We lived together before the Diaz fight and we would talk a lot about our training and our way of thinking.

"And Conor's very good on the ground. I've said it a lot, but he's solid on the ground. People talk a lot about the first fight with Nate, but Conor was trying to eat his way up to 170 lbs, but couldn't get there, while Diaz is coming down from like 205 lbs. That's going to make a difference."

Coming off the back of a big win at Polaris, and with the list of both jiu jitsu and MMA fighters baying for his blood constantly on the rise, Dillon is going to have to think long and hard about his next move. Does he chase his dream of becoming a jiu jitsu



world champion, or does he take up one of many prosperous contracts on the table and follow in Conor's footsteps?

"I love the gi and my goal was to win the Worlds at black belt ever since I was 15," says Dillon when looking to the future. "I got to the quarters this year and I feel like I'm right there. If I had managed to beat Otavio Sousa, I would have beaten the two guys after that.

"There's a lot of options on the table already for big MMA promotions. If I wanted to take it now, I could, but I'm weighing-up my options and I feel like there's plenty for me to achieve in jiu jitsu as well. If a UFC contract came up right now though, I feel like I'd probably take it – I'd have to."

Whatever the future holds, fans can rest assured they'll be entertained. Dillon's skills as a fighter are unquestionable, while his outspoken remarks and raw confidence communicated online are as entertaining as they come. You may not like his confidence, you may consider it arrogance, but you can bet you'll be listening in. It seems Danis' time with McGregor is shaping him off the mat as well as on it.

"For now, I just want to achieve my goals in jiu jitsu, then we can start to talk about me taking over MMA," says Dillon in closing. "I feel like I could do it now, to be honest, but give me a couple of years and it's going to happen. My style is perfect for MMA, and I'm excited to show the people at some stage. Sparring with the best fighter in the world is only going to make me better. A lot of people want to talk, but they don't want this life."

"I LOVE THE WAY CONOR THINKS. WE LIVED TOGETHER BEFORE THE DIAZ FIGHT AND WE WOULD TALK A LOT ABOUT OUR TRAINING AND OUR WAY OF THINKING"

150 hours
45 days
1 submission
1 life

The road to any Brazilian Jiu Jitsu competition is long and arduous, full of tides, both high and low. For star brown belt, Jeremy Jackson, the road to a superfight against an arch enemy is simply a part of life.

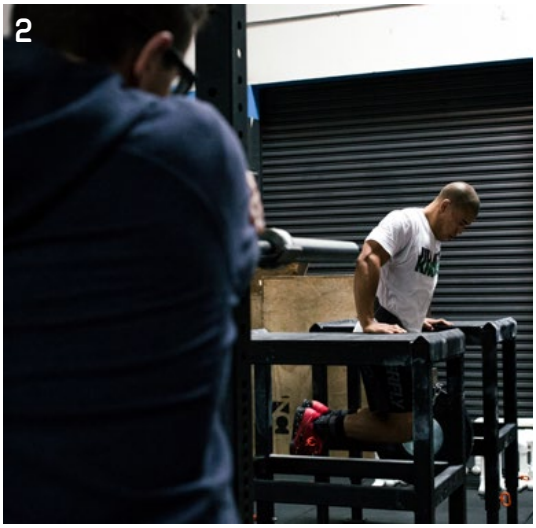
LOVE & WAR

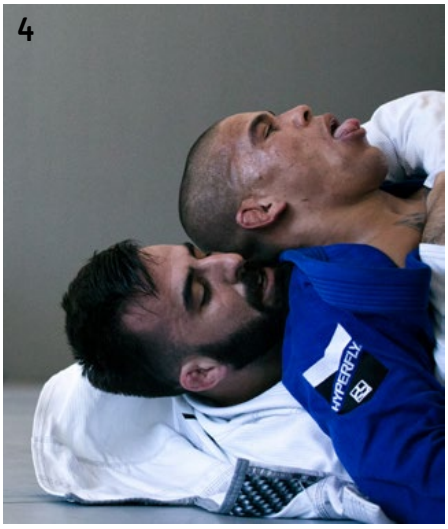
Hidden in a small kitchen cabinet, inside Jeremy Jackson and his wife Ashlee's one-bedroom Silicon Valley townhouse, lies an impressive assortment of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu competition medals. The number: too many to count; the types (gold, silver or bronze): well, the cupboard makes it too dark to decipher. Why would a man who dedicates four hours a day to training, and even more mental and emotional equity to the sport, seemingly discard his hard earned hardware? The answer to that question just may be as complex as the man himself.

It takes only a few minutes until your unavoidable fascination with Jeremy's pitbull-esque exterior fades, to reveal the depths of his humanity. You will begin to notice the unrelenting pace of his speech and find that it is simply a product of the breadth of his intellect. You'll learn that he runs a profitable marketing business, which he has delicately crafted to facilitate predictable, near turnkey results.

He will end up gushing over his wife Ashlee, showing not only a deep and honest admiration for his life partner, but a healthy respect cultivated by nearly a decade of growing into adulthood together. Lastly, you'll get to jiu jitsu. Jiu jitsu is Jeremy's contradiction, constantly grappling with his hyper-rational mind. Why give so much to such a notoriously unforgiving sport with little to no commercial market for its best athletes? He will rattle off convincing philosophical aphorisms that will give merit to the value of jiu jitsu, however, at the core of his commitment is simply an irrational and inexorable love for the gentle art.

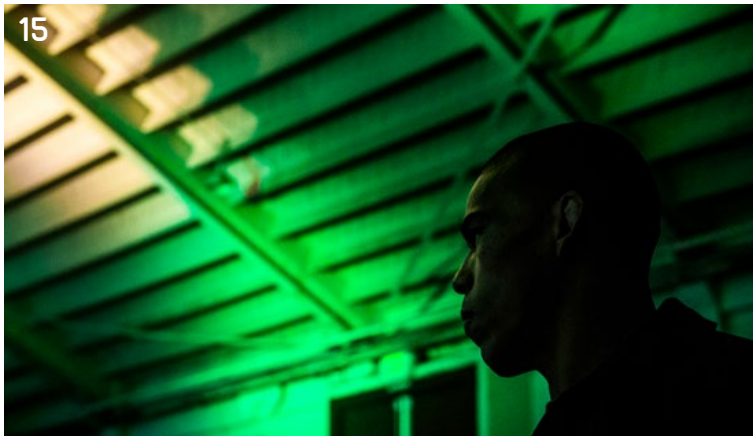
ANNOTATIONS 1. Jackson stretches in preparation for his 7:00am Olympic lifting session at NC Fit in San Jose, California. Jackson has incorporated an intensive weight training program into his weekly regime, seeing significant gains in both weight and strength. **2.** Weightlifting coach, Doug Beringer, silently observes Jackson as he works through a set of weighted dips. Beringer oversees the Olympic weightlifting portion of Jackson's weight training program. **3.** After a two-hour weight training session it's back home, where Jackson gets straight to work at his home workstation. Jackson runs a successful search engine marketing company, which is highly automated and allows him to train multiple times a day. **4.** One of Jackson's top training partners, Danny Bohigian, black belt under Dave Camarillo, works his grips after taking Jackson's back. **5.** After a hard sparring session at Samurai Jiu Jitsu in Campbell, California, and a weight training session earlier in the day, Jackson is spent. **6.** Jackson and his wife Ashlee get in some weekend cross training at a local track in Campbell, California. As husband and wife, their support of each other extends far beyond their home and the academy. The two consistently work out with together, pushing each other to their limits.

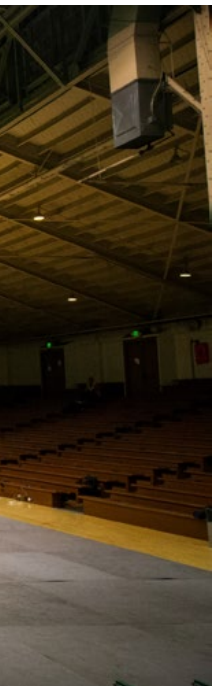




ANNOTATIONS 7. More than a jiu jitsu competitor, Jackson teaches classes at Heroes Martial Arts every Friday. Here, he teaches a leg drag passing sequence outlining multiple counters to his opponent's attempts to retain guard. **8.** Jackson attempts to pass the guard of a training partner while sparring at his home academy, Heroes Martial Arts, in Downtown San Jose. **9.** After teaching and training an hour long class, Jackson and his wife Ashlee discuss their lunch plans. Ashlee is undoubtedly his number one fan and the biggest catalyst for his personal growth.**10.** Time to roll! Jackson ties his belt as he steps foot on the mats at Guerrilla Jiu-Jitsu in Pleasanton, an academy located 30 miles away from his house in San Jose. **11.** Jackson and Bohigian square off again, this time on Bohigian's home turf. The two sparred for three rounds, exchanging both crisp technique and a competition style pace. **12.** Entering the Kezar Pavilion on the night of weigh-ins, 24 hours before Fight to Win Pro 8, it's clear the venue awaits many hours of overhaul. The production value of Fight to Win is one of the key selling points of the league for both athletes and fans.

ANNOTATIONS 13. Grappling superstar Garry Tonon steps onto the scales as Jackson eagerly awaits his turn. **14.** Jackson shares a satisfied grin as he weighs in safely under the 165lbs mark. Three days prior to weigh-ins he was 8lbs over weight. **15.** Upon entering the venue on the night of his super fight, Jackson takes a few minutes to acclimatise to the atmosphere and visualise his match that is only hours away. **16.** 45 minutes before stepping foot on the mat, Jackson begins warming up with a series of dynamic stretches, lunges, and ultimately moves on to push-ups. **17.** Only minutes away from taking centre stage, Jackson stays cool amidst (left side of the frame): Alpha Male brown belt, David Mitchell; Jackson's Professor, Alan "Gumby" Marques; Jiu Jitsu legend and Ralph Gracie Head Instructor, Kurt Osiander; (right side of the frame) Stella Freeman of Inside BJJ, and (behind) his opponent, Pedro Silva. **18.** Bright lights, thousands of cheering spectators, the mat, and his opponent awaits. After 45 days of physical and mental preparation, Jackson finally stands face to face with his moment.





WORDS: NIC GREGORIADES
PICTURES: BLANCA MARIA GARCIA

GOING TO CLASS IS NOT ENOUGH

Jiu jitsu truly is more than just a martial art / sport / hobby that you do a few times per week. It's a lifestyle that you live 24/7.

Part of embracing this lifestyle involves constantly searching for supplemental activities that improve your ability to both train in and recover from jiu jitsu classes. While I truly believe that jiu jitsu will help almost anyone become a happier, more actualised human being, I also feel strongly that the healthier, stronger and more co-ordinated you are, the quicker you will progress.

I find it very frustrating when a 50 year-old smoker who has been sitting at a desk for 30 years and hasn't exercised since high school wants me to make him the next Buchecha. Ok, maybe that example is a bit extreme....but there is some truth in it. How many of us just go to BJJ class without making any other efforts or lifestyle changes outside the academy?

I understand that some of us may have certain physical issues or responsibilities that prevent us from doing so. But for the vast majority of us, improving our health and conditioning (and thus jiu jitsu performance) just takes a combination of commitment, willpower and discipline.

Below, I give a general overview of the specific off-the-mat methods I've used to improve both my health and, in turn, my jiu jitsu over the years.

GO SPRINTING

Sprinting increases both endurance and strength, lowers body fat, builds mental toughness and improves heart health. That's basically a list of everything the jiu jitsu player needs!

One thing I always noticed about Roger Gracie is that before any type of competition - BJJ, Grappling or MMA, he always does sprints in the last few weeks leading up to the event. And he's been known to do 'ok'.

LEARN BASIC ANATOMY

It amazes me how little anatomy the average jiu jitsu guy knows. We're in the business of understanding how the human body moves and how to manipulate it, but how many of us can even name all the bones of the skeleton, or know the difference between a tendon and a ligament?

I study anatomy in my spare time, because not only is it fascinating, it also makes me a better BJJ player and teacher at the same time. For example, knowing exactly where the carotid arteries are, and that the ulna and the radius are effective structures to use against them makes me better at applying strangles.

Do yourself a favour - get an anatomy colouring book off Amazon and go through it - you'll be surprised how much more effective and enjoyable your study of jiu jitsu becomes.

GO ROCK CLIMBING

At this point, I have found no better complement to my jiu jitsu training than climbing. The improvement in grip strength alone is worth the effort. After about six months of rock climbing once a week I noticed a major increase in my forearm and finger strength.

A study on bone density between two control groups, one of weightlifters and one of rock climbers, found that the climbers had far higher levels of bone density. Obviously, increased bone density is invaluable to a jiu jitsoka.

Climbing enhances strength, balance and weight distribution. What more could a jiu jitsu fighter want? It's fun as hell too.

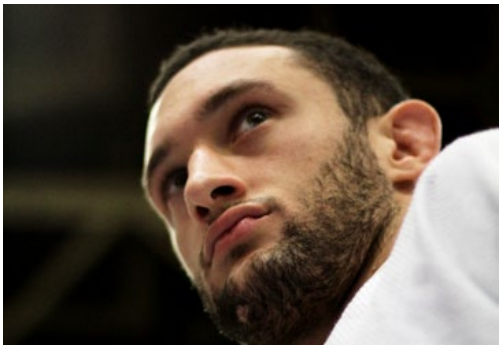
SWIM REGULARLY

Swimming is great for jiu jitsu. In my opinion it's far superior to running as a form of conditioning because there is no impact on the ankles, knees and hips. It simultaneously lengthens and strengthens the muscles and opens up the back and shoulders - areas of the body which often tighten up after a lot of grappling.

It's also excellent for breath control and strengthens the heart and lungs. It promotes rhythm and, when done at a slow pace, will help with over-training and recovery.

STUDY NUTRITION

This is a big one. While I don't think it matters quite as much as I did before, it's still really, really important to eat as well as you can, especially when you are putting your body through the type of punishment jiu



"HOW MANY OF US JUST GO TO BJJ CLASS WITHOUT MAKING ANY OTHER EFFORTS OR LIFESTYLE CHANGES OUTSIDE THE ACADEMY?"

jitsu inflicts upon it. A crappy diet is most likely going to result in crappy jiu jitsu performance.

There are millions of diets and eating plans out there, each one making a more exaggerated claim than the last. The best thing to do is educate yourself as much as possible, and then test that information both objectively and subjectively.

For example, if you've read a book claiming that the 'paleo' style eating program is best for optimum health and athletic performance and it resonates with you, try it out. Then pay attention to not only key markers (body fat composition, cholesterol levels etc.), but also how you feel when eating that way.

TRY COLD WATER THERAPY

Cold water therapy is fantastic for reducing inflammation, which is a pretty big deal for fighters, as you know. It also improves immunity and circulation, which are both obviously going to be beneficial for mat rats.

I remember telling my friend and fellow black belt, Kev Capel, about cold water therapy years ago. Kev had been an arctic warfare specialist stationed in Eastern Europe for several harsh winters, during which time he and his fellow soldiers only had access to cold showers. Even the idea of going through that again was out of the question to him.

Fast forward ten years and Kev is so sold on cold water therapy that he's installed an ice bath in his house and swears by it for helping his recovery after the 10+ jiu jitsu sessions he does each week.

ENGAGE IN GYMNASTIC / BODYWEIGHT TRAINING

If you wanted to, you could get in shape to grapple without ever using a pool, weight, cable, or any other equipment for that matter. I have a theory that you could take an Olympic gymnast and, with the right training protocols, get him to black belt level in jiu jitsu within 18 months.

Moving the body through space using push-ups, squats and pull-ups is a challenging and effective way to build strength and/or endurance. At the more challenging end of the spectrum, gymnastic style movements, such as handstands and bridging, develop pretty much every physical attribute a jiu jitsu fighter needs.

At the moment I am working with unilateral movements such as pistol squats and one-arm push-ups because I feel they offer the superior functional strength for jiu jitsu.

USE RESISTANCE TRAINING TOOLS

The beauty of using equipment is that it allows great control over the resistance variable of an exercise. You can only make a push-up so much harder (or easier), but with external resistance you can really fine-tune the load.

When I use weights and kettlebells I tend to focus on compound, multi-joint movements such as full squats, barbell rows and Turkish get-ups. Using rubber cables/strands is also very effective as they more accurately simulate the tensile strength of an opponent. You can find some really cool footage of Rickson Gracie strengthening his neck and hips using heavy-duty rubber strands.

PRACTICE YOGA

Anyone that knows me has heard me rave about yoga many times. I'm absolutely obsessed with yoga.

During my first yoga class I was the only guy in a class of 26. Gazing out at the sea of yoga pants in front of me, my initial thought was, 'Why the hell have I been wasting my time with jiu jitsu all of these years?'

But seriously...yoga is the most widely practiced exercise system in the world, and for good reason. Rickson Gracie is a yoga master, and without question that plays a role in his incredible mat skills.

Regular yoga practice increases flexibility, massages your internal organs and calms your mind. It increases lubrication of joints and strengthens both ligaments and tendons. It can also correct muscular-skeletal imbalances that can affect your health and jiu jitsu performance.

There are many different types of yoga, each with its own set of benefits and challenges. I would suggest you try several different classes and find one that suits you best.

NIC GREGORIADES

Nic is Roger Gracie's first black belt student and the founder of the Jiu Jitsu Brotherhood

王者の装束
SEJA UM CAMPEAO
BULL TERRIER
The Real Deal Aims
World Jiu-Jitsu Vice Champion
Marcio Andre

WORDS: OLIVER GEDDES

SHOULD I OPEN AN ACADEMY?

One of the most common questions I get asked when I run into members of the jiu jitsu community is, "So when are you going to open up an academy?"

It just seems like such an obvious step for some people that it really doesn't make sense why I haven't done it yet. This is a quick overview of why someone who loves teaching might not want to open an academy, even when it seems to make sense:

REASONS WHY NOT

Firstly, opening an academy is a huge commitment. It's kind of like having a child (something which, admittedly, I have limited personal experience of) - for the first few years of its life, you are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. With an academy, until you have enough members to employ additional staff you will be opening the gym, closing the gym, most likely cleaning the gym, all combined with the admin and logistics of this new and likely overwhelming stage in life.

Even when you DO have those additional staff to take the teaching load off you, you are always one phone call away if there's a problem. If you have an assistant instructor and he can't make it to a class, then either you have to cover for him or scramble to find someone else to take his place. This can be mitigated somewhat by another layer of staff but these things are hard to put in place for all but the biggest academies.

Most academies are going to lose money out of the gate. Leaving aside all the upfront costs of building development, matting, advance payments for rent if necessary, your subscription income is unlikely to rise above your costs for quite some time, and once they do, all you are doing is paying off the losses you made in the initial stages. So, to expect to make much income from an academy in the early stages is usually a trifle optimistic.

In situations like this, it's often better to maintain a second part to full-time job, which would at least mean that you have a separate source of income to help navigate the initial rocky stages of the business growth. Most successful academies I know began this way before the instructor eventually transitioned to a full-time role. Trying to go all in with an academy as your sole income straight out of the gate is a risk that doesn't usually pan out.

Your training is likely going to suffer in the early days. A lot of people like to complain about instructors who don't roll all the time, but these same people don't see everything else that the instructor may have had to do that day. Maybe he started the day with a 7am class, spent the morning re-fixing the mats to the wall, taught the lunchtime class followed by a couple of private classes, and only took two quick breaks for food. By the time the evening class rolls around he's basically been in the academy for twelve hours straight. And when you've done all that, you don't really feel like rolling to the death in the sparring class.

One problem I personally have is when you have an even number of students in the class; is it fair to make one person sit out and watch because you want to be able to roll with all the students? Sometimes it's appropriate, sometimes not, and even if you have the right numbers maybe you want to stop your more enthusiastic white belts from rolling into each other, or just gauge their progress and see what they need to work on. These are all things the full-time fighter doesn't need to worry about. They just focus on their own development and occasionally that of their training partners.

Finally, in the world of jiu jitsu, where social groups usually span continents, there are always a ton of opportunities in a ton of places. Whether they are seminars, tournaments, camps or just a jiu jitsu road trip - these are all hard to juggle with an academy. Maybe a friend pops up to offer you the chance to teach at a

Oli Geddes is a seasoned competitor, referee, globetrotter, half guard connoisseur and black belt under Roger Gracie

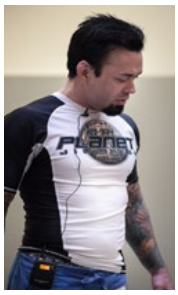
> **"UNTIL YOU HAVE ENOUGH MEMBERS TO EMPLOY ADDITIONAL STAFF YOU WILL BE OPENING THE GYM, CLOSING THE GYM, MOST LIKELY CLEANING THE GYM, ALL COMBINED WITH THE ADMIN AND LOGISTICS OF THIS NEW AND LIKELY OVERWHELMING STAGE IN LIFE"**

camp in Japan, or you get offered a superfight on a show. These are things that you may have to pass up because of the responsibilities you have to your students and the other instructors. So, this is something else that you need to take into account, both in terms of your experiences of the art and also the potential financial costs of turning down seminars because you have obligations in your own gym.

REASONS WHY

To me, the greatest thing about jiu jitsu from an instructor's perspective is being able to watch your students employ techniques that you have taught them, whether on the training mat or in competition. The ability to follow someone through from the day they first walk onto the mat until they get their blue belt and from there onwards, simply cannot be over-valued. It's the thing that more than anything else draws me to open a full-time gym of my own one day.

To know that everyone who steps on the mat is a little bit better because of your teaching and that they are learning, growing and evolving in an environment that you have created would be an exceptional thing. I get a small taste of that with the academies in my association that I supervise and spend time at, and it's something I want to take on more seriously down the line. Alongside the growth of your individual students, you also get the chance to grow and shape and expand the academy, and walk into a facility that you are proud to call your own.



There is also the draw of a sense of stability in the fluid and non-stop world of jiu jitsu. When you are teaching full time at a gym, your day is defined by the schedule there. You know what classes are on any given day of the week, what time they are, and what you have to plan around. This makes it relatively easy to settle into a routine and provides a structure that is hard to get on the road, when constantly visiting new academies, travelling for competitions, and all the other things that define the jiu jitsu lifestyle. When your schedule varies from week to week it's often hard to maintain consistency in any of your activities, whether they be supplementary training, hobbies or, to be honest, anything else.

To contradict my earlier statement, having your own academy can also, eventually, make getting quality training much easier. When you get to set the schedule, keep a constant group of quality training partners around you and have them grow and evolve to match each other's game, you are able to raise everyone's level with it. Whilst you take new things from every gym you visit, it's the day-in day-out rolling and drilling that really brings up a fighter's level and lets you make those things part of your game.

The vast majority of jiu jitsu practitioners who reach brown belt or above are already thinking about running their own gym. That's a totally understandable and admirable goal and just one of the reasons for the spread of jiu jitsu across the globe. But, there are always a few factors that need to be taken into account when it comes to deciding whether it's the right thing for you, and sometimes you just need to wait for the right moment. That moment hasn't come for me just yet, but I really do look forward to it when it does, and the next step in my personal jiu jitsu journey can begin.

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AESTHETIC

WORDS: MATT JARDINE
PICTURES: GOLIVE & FROTA ACADEMY

POTS OF GOLD: MINDFULNESS & BJJ

Do you believe in the pot of gold that our parents told us can be found at the end of a rainbow?

Do you believe in magic? How about extra-terrestrial existence? Could you ever at least consider any of these seemingly extreme ideas? Could you also consider that there may be an aspect of BJJ training and competition success that has never even crossed your mind, let alone embraced or integrated?

You'll need to hold on tight throughout this article because things are going to get bumpy. For some of you, this information is going to inspire. For others, it may irritate, as it challenges your already well-established beliefs. But I promise this:

- I have tried and tested all that I write about here - I'm not a crank - honestly, despite what my wife may say!

IN THE BEGINNING

This article is not about me, although I will use my story as an example because I know it best, and it's one that I can validate.

My sporting career began with a serious attempt at becoming a professional tennis player. Since the age of twelve, it was all that I wanted to accomplish. But there was a problem. I simply couldn't get a handle on my nerves during matches. A weak mental game is as fatal to a tennis player as a glass jaw is to a boxer and it led to failure, frustration and anger.

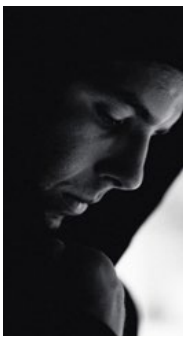
As my career continued, I investigated a plethora of avenues to help develop my mind: sports psychology, motivational programmes, breathing techniques and alternative medicine. You name it, I tried it.

With each disappointment at failing to find a lasting cure, I became more and more frustrated. My sports psychologist told me that losing a tennis match was not the end of the world, but to me it was. In my mind, every loss took me one step further from the only life I wanted; to be a professional tennis player.

At around 19, I found the martial arts. The fighting helped me physically assuage frustration while the theories and methodologies of Far Eastern cultures introduced me to the third pillar of the martial arts trinity: spirit. I had never before seriously considered this subject. Improvement of mind and body had consumed my time as a Western athlete, and this new addition of spirit would challenge previously held beliefs and knowledge. It was an area about which I knew next to nothing.

Nowadays, this esoteric area of development is not as alien as it once was. At any given time on social media, it is possible to find a meme inspiring us to 'develop our spirit', 'be a spirited person,' 'listen to our spirit's calling' or some other variant. While these may be a little clichéd and too 'hippie' for us to take seriously, is there something underlying that we can use to help us evolve our BJJ game?

Before we continue, I would like to de-mystify the term, spirit. You need not be religious to engage and benefit from it, nor do you have to be new-age either. From my investigations over the years I have come to understand that spirit is simply the intangible part of us that connects us to the source of life, the wellspring from which everything flows. Spiritual experts and religious leaders may roll their eyes at my oversimplification of the term, but this is neither an academic nor religious article and all we want to know is: can the spirit of the martial arts' 'mind, body and spirit' paradigm help improve our BJJ?



JAPAN AND THE 88

In 2007 I would learn a great deal more about spirit, and consequently how to apply it to my martial arts and everyday life. I travelled to Japan to walk its sacred pilgrimage - The 88 temple pilgrimage. Over the years it is a journey that has been walked by martial artists (Fighting legend Enson Inoue has previously walked it), Buddhists and non-specialists alike. All in search of spiritual, as well as life answers.

The experience was profound with the lessons learnt to be both life affirming and life changing, and I wrote a book about the experience ('*The Hardest Path*', due to be released at the end of 2016). The book tells the full story, but for this article I will highlight the most relevant part for us as grapplers.

From the silence created by hours and hours of moving meditation that takes part while on pilgrimage, I learnt that spirit - the universal canvas on which everything is drawn - is unlimited. It contains black and white, up and down, in and out, good and bad, win and lose, open and closed guard and every other possibility. I also discovered that every outcome is free for us to choose, as we choose. If we bother to imagine it, we can achieve it.

These were profound realisations indeed, and on my return from Japan and in the subsequent ten years that followed, I experimented with these discoveries during my day-to-day and athletic life to ascertain if they could be applied away from the solitude of pilgrimage. The tests were simple in nature and relevant to everyday

"IMPROVEMENT OF MIND AND BODY HAD CONSUMED MY TIME AS A WESTERN ATHLETE, AND THIS NEW ADDITION OF SPIRIT WOULD CHALLENGE PREVIOUSLY HELD BELIEFS AND KNOWLEDGE"

living. Driven by the hypothesis that we are free and able to choose the future of our desires and that this positive intention would serve to manifest it, I started on the project of 'moulding' my life.

I set goals for all areas of living: work, business, health, relationships, family, travel, money and leisure. Each goal was achieved as successfully as, or better than, I had originally intended during my visualisations. With each success, confidence in the process grew until I reached the point where I was happy offering the insights to friends, family, and now you.

VIVA LAS VEGAS

It wasn't long before my goal setting turned to BJJ, and I was ready to raise the stakes and test the hypothesis further. Just as we progress up the belt ranks, one plateau merely provides the platform to explore higher levels, standards and accomplishments. After a relatively long evening meditation session before retiring to bed, I got out my goal setting journal and wrote exactly this:

'***August 27th, 2015***
At this year's Worlds Masters in Vegas (2015), I choose to medal. Because of a series of great fights, I medal, get a ton of points (which takes me to number one in the UK in my division) and reach a whole higher level in my jiu jitsu. So much so, that I am awarded my purple belt.
Thank you.'

I always finish my goal setting requests with thank you. The book explains more about why, but for now, it's enough to say that it is merely polite!

On the first night at our fantastic Vegas hotel apartment, I couldn't sleep. A combination of jet lag, pre-tournament jitters and 'something else' made me sit up in bed. I reached for my journal once more and was inspired to add to my original goal.

'I am a BJJ world champion', read the new addition. It was emphatic, and it was written in the present. After that, sleep finally caught up with me, and I slept heavily until morning.

The days leading up to the Worlds Masters event were a bit of a blur - Vegas is a pretty crazy place you know - and I forgot all about my goal setting as I proceeded with tournament preparations.

Match day finally arrived. I compete in the Masters 3 division - a division that we fondly nickname, 'the old enough to know better,' division. It is a hotly contested division, of that you can be sure, but it is filled with guys who have burgeoning age on their side and a little more in their lives than just BJJ. We fight hard, but we are also keen friends both in the bullpen and after matches. We don't beat our chests when we win, nor wear shame around sagging shoulders when we lose.

The draw suggested that the Worlds Masters 2015 had attracted more Masters 3 competitors to its mats than is usual for this division, and anyone wanting the gold would need to win four or five matches to do so. My jet lagged lungs sighed at the possible effort!

I often read before competing, and many people ask what I'm reading. On this occasion I was reading a book about North American ornithology - it's not very rock and roll, but I did tell you I was Masters 3! Reading calms me and I slipped into a state of effortless peace. I was ready.

My tournament campaign felt like I was on autopilot. It was smooth, clear and calm, almost as if I was observing 'me' competing, rather than 'doing' the competing. Luck went my way, guards were passed, points were accumulated, and submissions were found. On this occasion, everything fell into place, and I won gold. I was a Worlds Master champion; (the points accumulated would take to me to number 1 in the UK and number 9 in the world for my division. I was also later awarded my purple belt from Roger Gracie.)

To top the event, as well as my wife being in the crowd supporting me, two more very special people stood in the wings. The first was one of my current teachers and influences at RGA, Professor 'Juniao'. The second and much more surprising was my first Professor at RGA, the inimitable Alex Faria. Alex was now teaching in the USA, and he was the last person I expected to see mat side. It seemed I had realised my most ambitious dream to date and the universe had added the cherry to the experience by providing key influences in my life to witness it. It was as near miraculous as it is possible to get.

As I stated previously, this article is not about me, although I use my example. Mine is just one of many seemingly magical results that emanate once we begin to embrace and integrate the concept of spirit and its unlimited ability to provide the lives of our dreams. And the goals needn't be extravagant or extreme. To a senior citizen suffering with arthritis, achieving a journey across the kitchen to make a cup of tea is as miraculous as any medal we may take home with us. The 'big' stories merely show us the possibilities; it is up to us to apply them to our lives as we see fit.

I understand that I may be on shaky ground writing about this sort of subject to a BJJ audience and demographic. As well as a writer, though, I am also one of the numbers that make up this readership. I hear and understand the possible objections you may have. Trust me; I have had them all myself.

But I encourage you to ponder further on the 'spirit' aspect that the martial arts are said to develop alongside the mind and body. Ask yourself if it may be of benefit to you. Investigate what may at first seem highly unlikely, coincidental or simply weird. Dare enough to open your mind to the possibility that there may be something to this 'mumbo-jumbo'. Many others have already done so. Look closely at BJJ competitors stepping onto the mat, boxers climbing into the ring or fighters walking up into the cage; some of them either look to the sky, cross their chests or clasp hands together and bow. These and myriad other variations suggest that athletes are incorporating a degree of 'spirit thinking' into their preparations.

Of course, you don't have to investigate this any further. Ultimately, it's your choice. But while you aren't investigating, I'm going to be busy writing more crazy goals in my journal, just for fun.

Hmm, what's next? How about subbing that Roger Gracie guy? ■

Matt Jardine is a full-time teacher of the Martial Arts, writer and author. His new book, 'The Hardest Path', is due for release at the end of 2016. He has two recommendations for those who want to begin investigating the subject matter in this article further: Read his book (obviously), and investigate mindfulness meditation.

WORDS: SAM JOSEPH
PICTURES: GOLIVE & FROTA ACADEMY

FINDING INSPIRATION IN OUR ACADEMIES

Practising Brazilian Jiu Jitsu brings us many benefits beyond simply having fun.

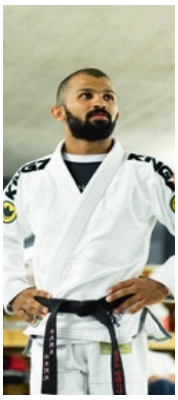
For example, we improve and maintain a high level of physical fitness, develop close friendships, learn how to deal with adversity and practise actively contributing to and participating in a meritocratic society. That said, even knowing that we are profiting in these ways, every now and again we need to be "inspired" to stay the course and continue training.

While we know BJJ is worthwhile, no one claims that it is easy. The road to black belt is often quoted as being eight to ten years and with only four promotions of merit (blue, purple, brown and black), the need for periodic inspiration is clear… especially in the "I want it now" world that we live in. Knowing where to find that inspiration quickly and efficiently is a great investment in our own BJJ journeys. Here are a few places we can look in our own academies!

WOMEN WHO TRAIN

BJJ legend, Rickson Gracie, once commented that Jiu Jitsu academies were filled with young, athletic men. The irony that his brother Royce and his father Helio had dominated their no-holds barred fights despite their comparative lack of athleticism was not lost on him. The truth is that they had a distinct technical advantage over their opponents in BJJ and their success, and the subsequent growth that it generated, has spread that technical knowledge all over the world. In BJJ, we often speak about how technique overcomes size and strength, but when technique is equal or even close, size and strength can be decisive factors.

This scenario routinely plays out in our academies today. We have all seen the new athletic white belt come in, get dominated by a smaller, technically superior coloured belt and sign up. As time goes on, the "new person" closes the knowledge gap and their physical advantages start to play a more meaningful part in sparring. While this new person meets with some initial adversity, many times they understand that their road to at least some success will be a short one.



With this in mind, imagine the experience of many women who start Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. As they are walking into a male-dominated, combat-sport environment, they soon realise that they will be operating at a physical disadvantage for much of the time. Whereas men can take small short-cuts using raw power in sparring, women lack that option and have to take the long way of getting the technique, timing and details right. And even then, the fact is that women will face the reality of having larger and stronger regular training partners in a combat sport.

Considering these things, our female teammates deserve immense respect. We all know how difficult BJJ can be regardless of what advantages or natural talent we possess. To train consistently and progress, knowing that you have to overcome physical disadvantages many of your partners do not, is akin to running a race uphill when your opponents are on level ground…and winning!

It is awesome to see major tournaments with full women's divisions. The level of talent and skill is at an all-time high in women's BJJ. It can be easy to overlook that all of these athletes are the minority in their daily environments and that they started the sport facing a steep incline. When we need external motivation to train, the place to look might be the female teammate whose mere presence is a testimony to perseverance, patience and commitment!

COMPETITORS

Some BJJ schools put an emphasis on competition, while in others it is something that a few individuals participate in. Whatever the case may be, there are always people who compete and those teammates can be a good source of inspiration.

Those who compete tend to train both regularly and with a heightened level of purpose. Without frequent and focused practice, they simply would not set themselves up for success. This is not to say that these people do not have fun, but there is a certain level of commitment and seriousness that competitors bring to training sessions on a consistent basis. This intensity comes from the knowledge that they are going to test their skills in a combat sport. The beauty of this is that they are not only reaping the benefits of their discipline themselves but are also setting a standard for their training partners. Their example, and the courage they show in their willingness to accept the challenge of competition, can lift us up when we are running short of the motivation needed to hit the mat.

While at the Yamasaki Academy in the early 2000s, I was fortunate enough to

Sam Joseph is a 2nd degree Black Belt in BJJ under the Yamasaki Academy. He was awarded his black belt in 2007 and has vast experience as a teacher, BJJ competitor and MMA fighter.

"THOSE WHO COMPETE TEND TO TRAIN BOTH REGULARLY AND WITH A HEIGHTENED LEVEL OF PURPOSE"

have teammates like Murilo Santana, David Jacobs, Noah Booth and Nakapan Phungephorn, who were all coloured belts with me and active competitors. Whether they won or lost meant less to me than their dedication to the preparation process and to getting better at BJJ. There were many days when they were the reason I packed my gi and made my way to the academy and that is a debt I can never repay.

COACHES:
In the mid-2000s, I got to spend a year training with ADCC champion and Nogi world champion, Pablo Popovitch, who was running an academy in South Florida. That time made a tremendous impression on my BJJ and my views on the lifestyle. Pablo was obviously a world-class athlete with incredible technical ability. While exposure to those things stimulated my progression, it was his unbridled enthusiasm for day-to-day training that had the most impact on me. Pablo smiled and laughed at the academy every day and that produced an environment full of positive energy and fun. At the time, I had no idea that I would one day open my own BJJ academy but Pablo's example resonated with me to the point that I now see myself doing many of the same things I saw him do… including laughing and smiling every day on the mat.

Some instructors are active competitors while others are just great communicators and teachers. Some instructors build awesome atmospheres while others galvanize their students with their passion and energy. There is also the fact that, as students, we can be attracted to different characteristics of the same teacher as we view them through our own lens. The beauty of BJJ today is that there are competent instructors out there with a variety of strengths and personalities and that gives us the ability to find the "fit" for us. When we find the instructor that suits us, that interaction can inspire us when we need that extra push.

OURSELVES:
The final place I recommend we look for inspiration is the place we often look at least: ourselves. How often can we see the "good" in others and their BJJ journey but fail to recognise what is great about our own games and development? I had a conversation with one of my white belt students the other day about their long and short term goals in the sport, and the biggest challenge I had was communicating that their goals would only be limited by their imagination and commitment.

When they pressed me on it, I shared that when I started BJJ in the late 1990s, there were not any purple belts in most BJJ academies. All we could see on a day-to-day basis were blue belts and so achievements beyond that rank were tough to visualise or even strive to obtain. If you had told me that I would one day be a black belt, and win tournaments at that level, I would have struggled to believe you, but that is what came to pass. Not only did sharing that help my student understand the power of his own potential, but it reminded me to reflect on my own "road-travelled" for encouragement. We must remember to allow our own experiences to empower us and fuel our drive towards our vision of what we want out of BJJ.

CONCLUSION:
Understanding that real inspiration is easily accessible in our own academies is very useful. It allows us to proactively support our attitudes towards BJJ and/or to tap into these sources when we have need of a "pick me up" or run into challenging times.

Either way, we are able to take ownership of how we feel about our BJJ journeys rather than just react to circumstances and how they make us feel. That ownership of our own inspiration is powerful as it promotes the longevity and consistency that long-term benefits and achieving big goals require.

See you on the mat! ■

BJJ SUMMER WEEK: TRAINING & PARTYING IN SARDINIA

When you love jiu jitsu as much as we all do, you'll no doubt appreciate just how hard it can be to stay away from the mats, and a week on holiday with no chance of training becomes a daunting prospect. As soon as I heard about *BJJ Summer Week*, which would be taking place on the beautiful Italian island of Sardinia, I knew I'd found my perfect vacation destination.

"With over 140 people making their way to Sardinia, the camp was one of the best attended we've ever seen, and you'd be hard pushed to return home disappointed"

After a short journey from the UK, I arrived in the Sardinian capital of Cagliari, a stunning city with an eight-mile coastline, awash with culture, picturesque architecture and fantastic nightlife. Having been picked up from the airport by camp representatives, I quickly made friends on the minibus with fellow attendees before we dropped our bags off at the hostel and were ushered out for our first dinner.

All the meals on the trip were included in the package price, which was excellent value and obviously a fantastic plus for people looking to work to a budget. Three beers and an amazing steak dinner later, I'd already chatted with jiu jitsu enthusiasts from Croatia, Germany, the UK and of course, Sardinia, with the finer details of our future trips to visit these new acquaintances being put on hold until after dessert.

After settling down for an early first night, I awoke for breakfast and met the whole team behind *BJJ Summer Week*, who were extremely friendly and very helpful in explaining what was on offer during the trip and going through the itinerary. Speaking of which, the itinerary boasted a whopping three training sessions per day and consisted mainly of gi jiu jitsu, but there were also nogi sessions and even a little wrestling. The coaches in attendance included our resident technique guru, Nick Brooks, as well as an array of other top European black belts, who all had plenty of knowledge to share.

We all couldn't wait to hit the mats, so after polishing off breakfast and a coffee we jumped on the minibus and headed for our first session. I was delighted to see the academy was bright, clean and open to the elements, so there was a cool breeze sweeping across the mat despite the summer heat. After Nick Brooks' amazing masterclass, everyone sparred for over an hour, sharing jokes, hanging out and having a lot of fun. The atmosphere was perfect and truly represented what jiu jitsu, in my eyes, is all about: making friends, training hard and enjoying yourself. After just one day in Sardinia, it was obvious we were all in for an unforgettable experience.

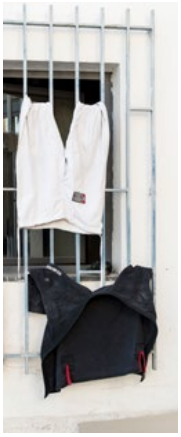
The inclusion of a morning, afternoon and evening session offered fantastic flexibility for attendees. Whether you wanted to party hard until the early hours (we'll get to that) and then train later, or kick-start your day with jiu jitsu before heading out to chill at the beach, it was totally up to you. Perhaps one of the most uniquely appealing things about the Summer Week was that for every jiu jitsu session on the itinerary over the five days, there were non-jiu jitsu activities available to try. These ranged from going on boat trips, visiting old villages, hiking, sea fishing or relaxing at different beaches.

It was awesome to see that many people had brought their friends or partners along for the trip even though they didn't do jiu jitsu, as there was plenty going on for people not interesting in grappling. For me, the combination of nursing a little hangover at the beach before hitting the academy for a double session in the afternoon represented the perfect day, but the freedom was there to do what you wanted. Many people were at the academy for all three sessions every day to ingest as much info as they could, while others were content with a just a couple of jiu jitsu classes across the whole week. Whatever you wanted to do, you could do it.

When it came to the nightlife, we couldn't have asked for better hosts than camp organiser, Emanuele Frongia, and his crew. Cagliari has an amazing nightlife, and we managed to hit most of the bars during our five-day stay! A real highlight had to be the evening booze tour, which consisted of walking up the hill in central Cagliari to visit the castle and observe the views. Emanuele and his fellow Sardinians were full of interesting facts about their home town, which was great entertainment on the way around. Of course, this walk also involved stopping at every bar on route for a drink, before coming back to sea level and finishing off the evening with a game of beer pong.

The inclusion of so many social activities away from the mats really helped bring people together, and there were clearly long-term friendships being made throughout the course of the camp. In a conversation over dinner, event organiser, Emanuele, was quick to reiterate that, "our main goal is to offer people the perfect holiday, which is based around jiu jitsu, but also gives them the chance to enjoy Sardinia, make friends and have a great time."

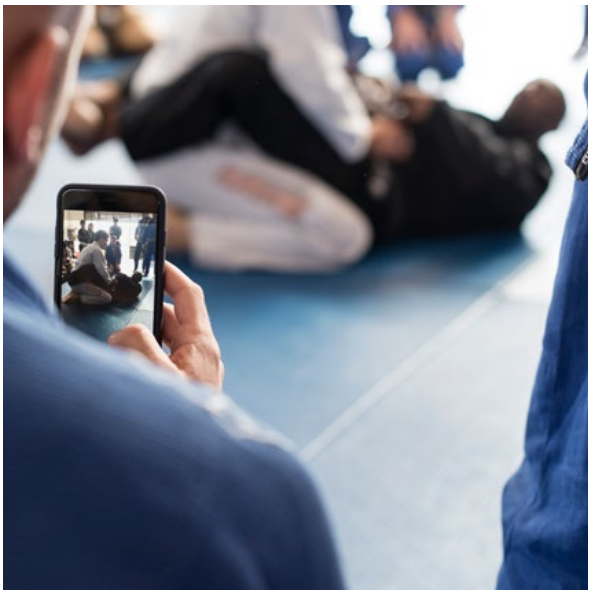
"This is our first *BJJ Summer Week*, so I am sure there's going to be plenty of things to improve on," Emanuele continued. "But, I think we have managed to put on a great week for people, at an affordable price, and our goal is to make things even bigger for our camp next year. We've built some really good relationships with everyone over the week and I feel like it's been a success."

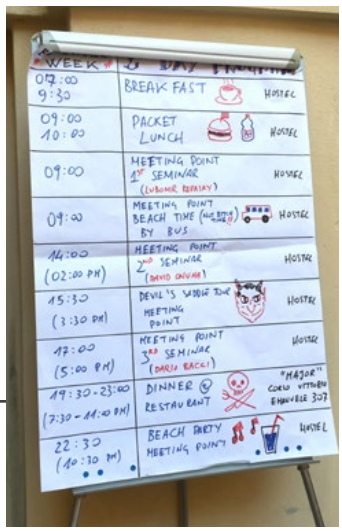


With over 140 people making their way to Sardinia, the camp was one of the best attended we've ever seen, and you'd be hard pushed to return home disappointed. Considering you could have paid as little as 260 euros for accommodation, all your food and all the training, we just can't stress enough what an awesome deal was on offer.

The organisers had even considered the travel costs, opting to run the camp from September 21st to 26th. This meant that British holidaymakers could avoid expensive flights as it was outside of school holidays, but could still indulge in beautiful summer weather and Sardinia's stunning beaches.

When the week came to a close, and it was time to pack up our gis, I was definitely sad to go. The jiu jitsu was great, the people were friendly and the island of Sardinia is my idea of paradise, so why would you ever want to leave? I can't wait for their second instalment in 2017, as there's no doubt it will be bigger and better than their debut week – we hope to see you there!




WEEK
07:00 9:30 BREAK FAST HOSTEL
09:00 10:00 PACKET LUNCH HOSTEL
09:00 MEETING POINT 1ST SEMINAR HOSTEL
09:00 MEETING POINT BEACH TIME BY BUS HOSTEL
14:00 (02:00 PM) MEETING POINT 2ND SEMINAR HOSTEL
15:30 (3:30 PM) DEVIL'S SLIDE TIME MEETING POINT HOSTEL
17:00 (5:00 PM) MEETING POINT 3RD SEMINAR HOSTEL
19:30-23:00 (7:30-11:00 PM) DINNER RESTAURANT
22:30 (10:30 PM) BEACH PARTY MEETING POINT HOSTEL

Clockwise from the top: 1. A21 jiu jitsu academy, Sardinia. 2/3. One of the stunning beaches and hill-top views in the Sardinian capital, Cagliari. 4. The welcome pack. 5. Daily schedule. 6/7. David Onuma seminar.

In this rendition of Masterclass, Buchecha showcases a number of armlock variations he's been working on, as well as a neat open guard pass.

MASTERCLASS

MARCUS ALMEIDA

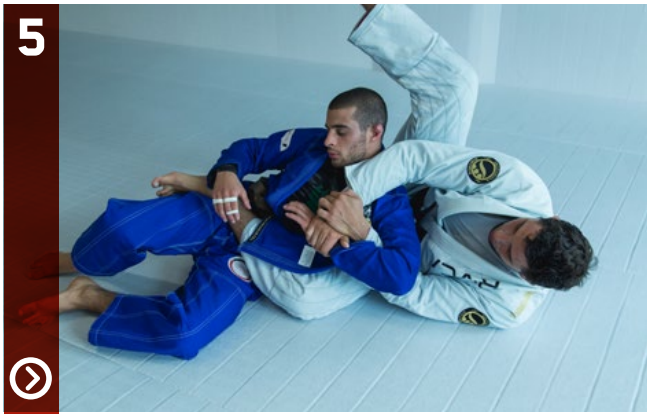
Marcus 'Buchecha' Almeida is a man who needs little introduction, having established himself as the leading athlete in our sport. A black belt under Rodrigo Cavaca and reigning IBJJF Absolute and Ultra Heavyweight champion, Buchecha is known for his dynamic movement and athleticism, despite his size and strength.

Pictures: Josh Halvatzis

1: Your opponent is on their side and you have secured a grip of their left wrist, with your right elbow behind their head.

2/3: With a solid control of your opponent's left arm, you can sit back, insert your first hook and take their back, but it also sets up the armlock.

4: You roll to your left shoulder and bring your left hook right across your opponent's hip.



5/6: Next, bring your right leg in front of your opponent's head and drive it down to the floor to arrive in the seated armlock position.

7/8: Maintain the grip you have on your opponent's wrist until you feel comfy you can release the grips to finish the armlock.

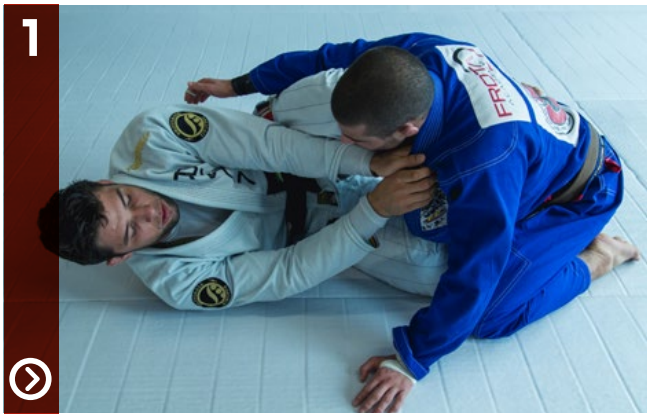
1/2/3: Starting from side control, switch your base so that you are facing your opponent's legs and have isolated both of their arms behind your back.

4/5: Keep your lat tight to your opponent's chest, and at the same time grab your own foot and feed it through to reach the mount position.

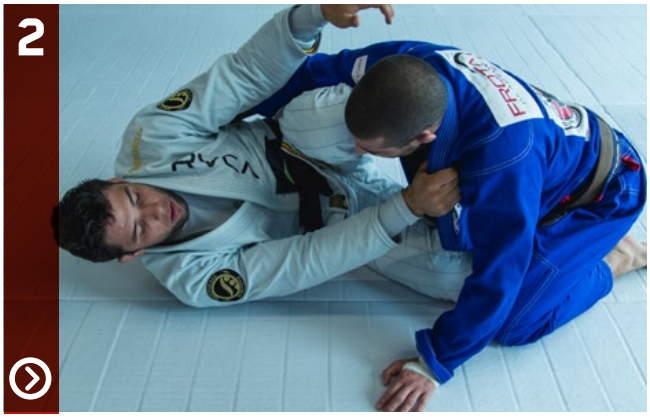
6/7: Use your left arm to shift your opponent's left arm across their body and start setting up an armlock.

8/9: From here, you can isolate both of your opponent's arms and drive your hips forwards to start shifting further towards their head.

10/11/12: Control your opponent's left tricep with your left hand as you sit off to your left and create the angle for the submission. By controlling the far tricep like this I find it much easier to stretch their arms out to finish the armlock.



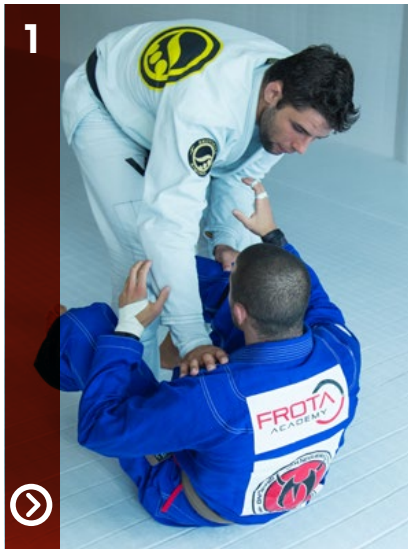
1: You are on the bottom in half guard with your left knee stopping your opponent from flattening you out. You also have control of their left lapel with your right hand.



2/3: Bring your left arm around and grip your opponent's right elbow, and at the same time kick your left leg through to start to isolate their arm.

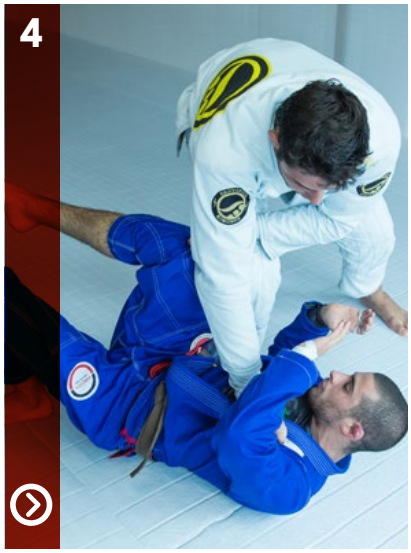
4/5/6: Pinch your knees together and start to roll towards your right, as this will apply lots of pressure on your opponent's arm.

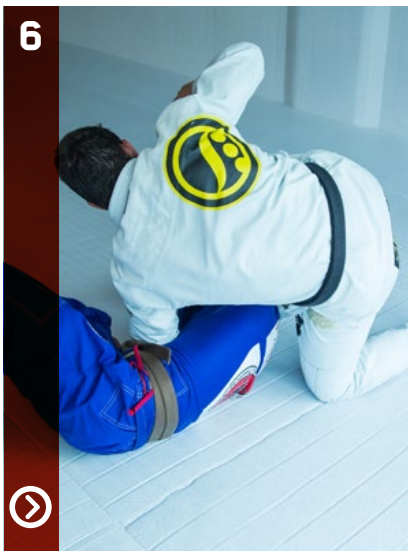
7/8: If your opponent doesn't tap here they will be forced to roll, so make sure you grab their trouser with your right arm as they roll to maintain a finishing position when their back hits the mat.



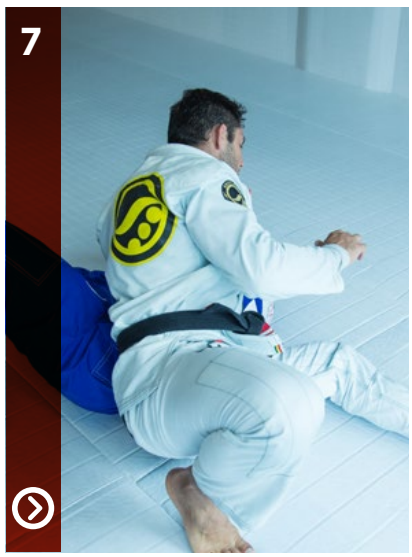
1/2: Your opponent is sitting up and looking to establish their guard from this position. From here, I always look to gain control of their right trouser leg and flatten them out by pushing with my right hand.

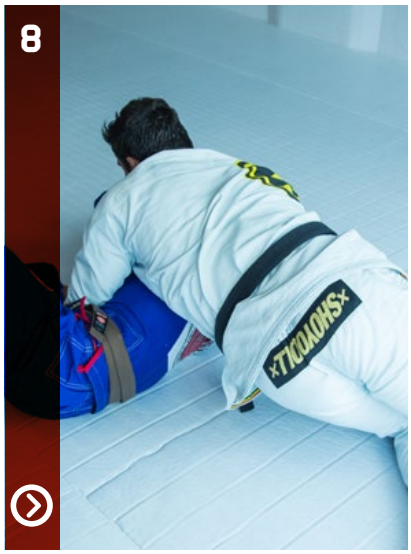
3/4: As soon as your opponent's shoulders hit the mat, kick backwards with your right leg and bypass their guard.

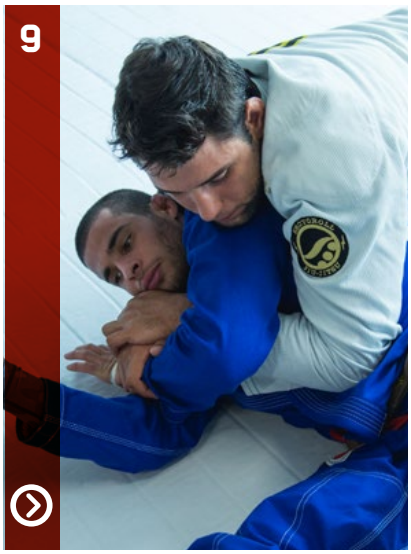




5/6/7: As soon as your opponent realises you've passed, they will try to roll towards you and prevent the pass. You must anticipate this reaction and drop your left hip to the mat as pictured.







8/9: As soon as your hip hits the mat, drive your weight forwards and lock up a solid grip on your opponent's left arm. This grip is actually the starting point for the 'back take to armlock' technique in this feature.

1: You are on top in the half guard position, but you are struggling to free your right leg and progress to side control. I've started to hit this armlock when you cannot free your leg from here.

2: Bring your base forwards and underhook your opponent's left arm with your right arm.

3: Next, switch your base so that your left leg is based-out and your right knee is on your opponent's chest as pictured.

4/5/6: Maintaining your grip on your opponent's arm with your right arm, switch your base to their other side, while aiming to sneak your left foot into the space behind their left armpit.

7/8: Once you land with your butt on the mat you can extend backwards to finish the submission, even though your right foot is still caught in half guard.

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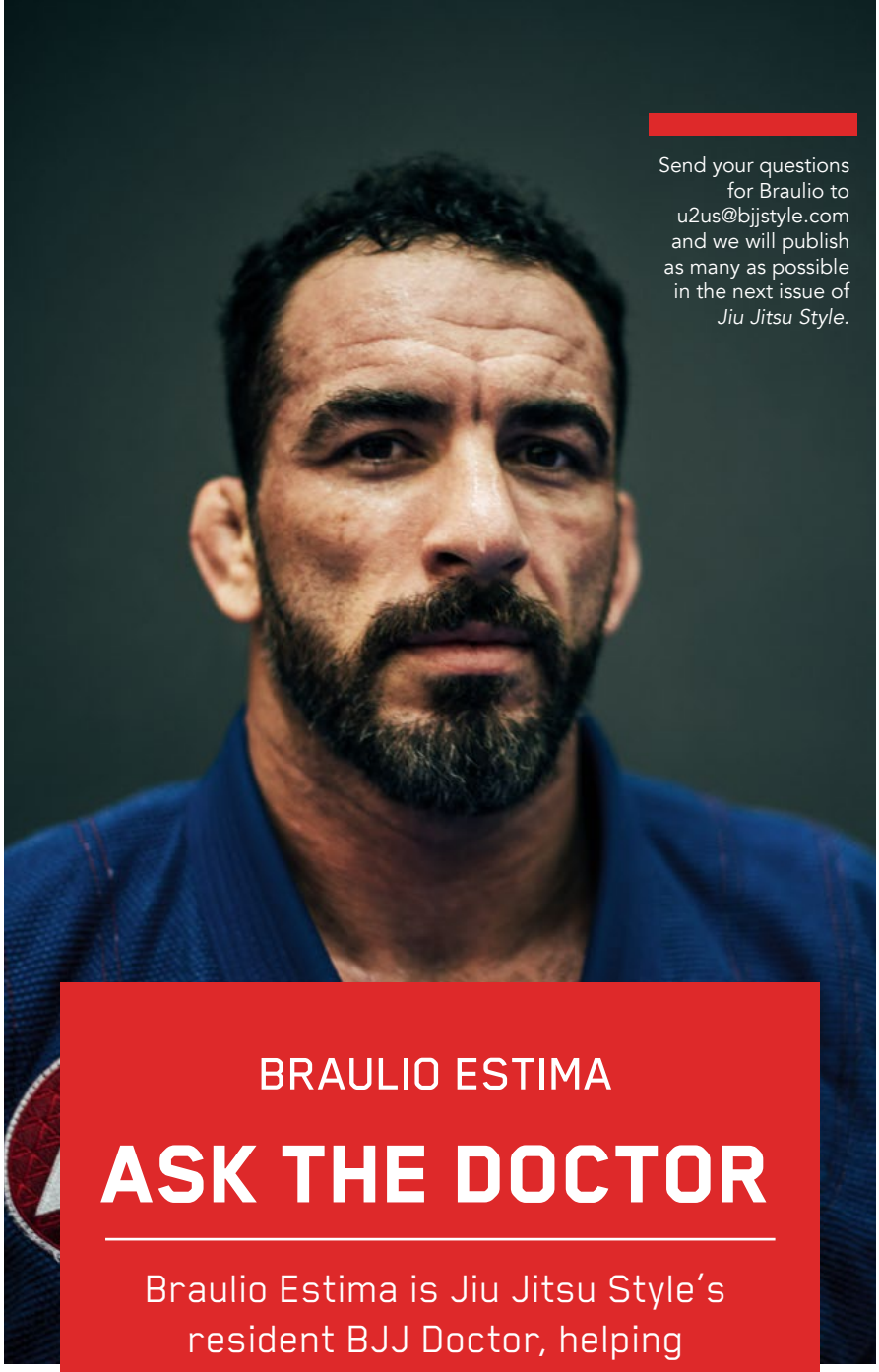


Send your questions for Braulio to u2us@bjjstyle.com and we will publish as many as possible in the next issue of *Jiu Jitsu Style*.

BRAULIO ESTIMA

ASK THE DOCTOR

Braulio Estima is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident BJJ Doctor, helping prescribe our readers just the right tonic of tips to improve their grappling game.

Hi Braulio,
My son is 15 years old and completely obsessed with jiu jitsu, which is probably my own doing as I am a purple belt myself and took him down to his first class! I am very pleased that he is so dedicated to something, especially at such a young age when there can be plenty of distractions in life. My only concern is that he is already talking about making jiu jitsu his 'job', which I personally think is such a difficult goal considering the opportunity in jiu jitsu is very limited both as a competitor and as a teacher.

I feel like I want to guide him towards education so he can establish a safety net outside a sport where the rewards are so small. What advice would you give a 15 year-old who is looking to make jiu jitsu his career and did you have any advice or issues when you were the same age?

- Pete

Hi Pete,
This is a very good question, and something that I can relate to from when I was younger. For me, I always wanted to be an athlete, a professional athlete. I didn't mind if that was me being a fighter, or a footballer or whatever, but of course I also had my doubts about what I could achieve. I also had pressure from my family to follow an academic path, because all my family up until that point had gone down that route.

I decided that the best thing for me to do was to press on with my studies and my jiu jitsu at the same time for as long as I possibly could. I think when you're 15 years old you believe you have lots of life experience, when we know that's not the case, so I would suggest it's too young to follow one path and there should be options in place.

One thing I learned from my dad is that there are many more hours in the day than you think, so you have the time to do a lot more than think you can. Even when I was training for the Worlds, I was never on the mat more than four hours a day, so you always have time to do other things. I did structural engineering at university for three years alongside jiu jitsu and I would say 15 is too young to put all your eggs in one basket.

So overall, I'd suggest trying to convince your son that he needs to have a plan B, and that jiu jitsu is something you can do alongside a job or studying at his age. Keep analysing the situation and see how his career progresses in BJJ. If he starts doing well further down the line, then he may make a decision to really invest in that, but always have a plan B. I started jiu jitsu at 16 and made a decision to make it my single focus when I was 22, so that gives you some perspective. You also HAVE to love what you do for you to get the results.

Hi Braulio,
I am adding in one hour, mixed level classes at my academy and I have been struggling to figure out the best way to structure them. They are basically one hour additions that my students have been asking for so they can train in the morning if they want, but I don't know if I should include a warm up, scrap some technique or limit the sparring to get everything done. How would you structure a general one hour class at your academy?

Cheers - *Mark*

Hi Mark
I actually have one hour, all-level classes in my curriculum as well. Generally I do a quicker warm-up of around five to ten minutes so that we have around 50 minutes of class time to play with, and then I always let students use the mat after the class for a little while if they want to do some additional training.

I tend to show a position that can then be replicated in specific training, so we can flow into the specific training and then finally to sparring. I would say that my biggest suggestion is to get a feel for the class you are teaching when considering what you want to dedicate the most time to. If there are a lot of beginners you may want to spend more time on the position, then specific training and minimal free training. However, if you have a class full of advanced students you may just want to show a quick technique then get into specific and free training.

That would be my best suggestion Mark, so make sure you consider the students you are teaching, tailor the class depending on their level and then if you can, always leave another 20 minutes or so after the class so they can get a few more rolls in if they really want to.

Mount Escape

Hi Braulio,
Do you have any sneaky / tried and tested mount escape options you could share?

- Jim

Hi Jim,
This is an escape Roger Gracie showed me that works very well. Your opponent thinks that they are able to finish the choke, when actually you have a solid position to defend it once you roll to the top.

1/2. Your opponent is in mount and has inserted a strong choking grip with their right hand. The first thing your must do is control their choking arm on the inside of their elbow with your right hand. 3. As soon as your opponent looks to place their second choking arm in as pictured, control their right lapel and close your elbow tight to your side. They will feel they can finish from here. 4/5/6: Next, bridge your hips and lift your right elbow up to the ceiling to arrive on top. 7/8: When your opponent arrives in closed guard, they will likely still attempt to finish the choke, but you can simply push them backwards to relieve the pressure with your left arm and the grip you have on their lapel.

Hi Braulio,
I'm 50 now and I can't really see myself competing anymore, which is a daunting prospect, but something that has to happen if I want to be able to just stay on the mat longer. Do you envision a time you will stop competing or will you keep on going until you drop? More importantly, do you think you will need to find other areas of your life to challenge yourself if you do decide to leave competition behind you?

Cheers - Stuart

Hi Stuart
Anyone who is a competitive person will always be looking for ways to challenge themselves. The thing is, there will be a time when your body won't be able to take the hard training required to compete at the best level you can, we all know this. I believe the first thing to consider is the health of your body and as soon as competing affects your body, your health and general lifestyle away from jiu jitsu, then you need to evaluate what's important to you.

It's not about a specific age. For me, I thought I was going to compete in the adult divisions until I was 40 years old, but things have already started changing for me that I couldn't have predicted. I have different commitments away from jiu jitsu and I guess I have already achieved the things that I really wanted to in the sport. My whole life has been about focussing for competitions, so it's a tough situation for me as well. At the moment, I'm thinking I will continue to compete as long as it doesn't affect my current commitments, my health and my private life.

One sure thing is that when competition is not an option, you can always enjoy jiu jitsu as a lifestyle and look to challenge yourself in other ways within the sport, or outside the sport. That's one of the beauties of our art, as everyone has a different relationship with it and I guess we just have to be prepared to adapt this relationship as we get older.

Lasso Grip Guard Pass

Hi Braulio,
What's your 'go to' pass when your opponent gets a strong lasso grip and just clamps down on it? Basically, I struggle a lot once someone gets lasso and half spider guard control.

- Jody

Hi Jody,
This can be a really tough position to pass, especially if they have good grips. This is something I like to do that works really well, so I hope it helps!

1. Your opponent has established a leg lasso and half spider guard position. Start by gripping the top of your opponent's trouser with your left hand. 2/3. Come up onto your feet and bring your hips forwards to prevent any attacks. 4. Next, use your hips to lift your opponent off the mat. This will mean that they will have to burn out their grips if they want to stay in that position. 5/6. As soon as your opponent moves, and they will have to move, use that momentum to smash their right leg across your body and down to the mat. 7/8. Keep control of your opponent's leg as you grip their lapel with your right hand to stabilise the position.

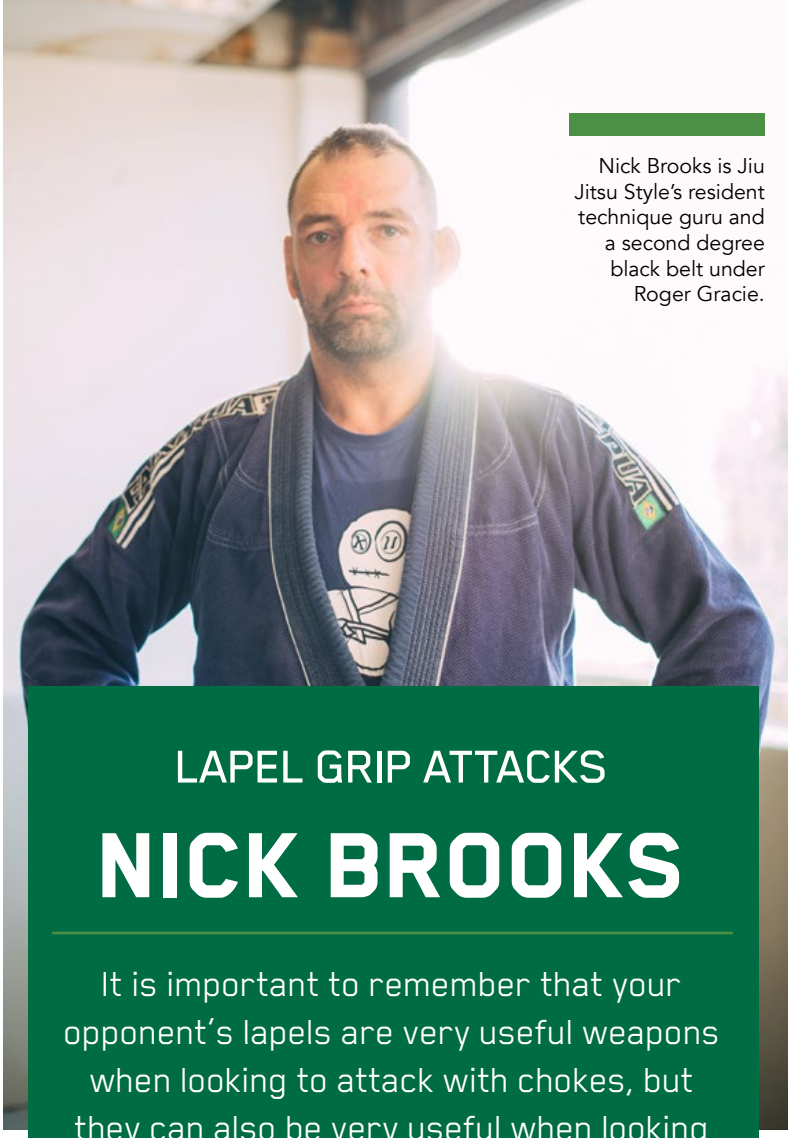
Recovering from Turtle Guard

Hey Braulio,
What would you say is the most efficient way to recover to your guard from the turtle position? I struggle to recover my guard once I've ended up there.

- Claire

Hi Claire
This is a cool way to completely reverse the position and often you can end up on top. See how it works for you.

1. Your opponent has made you turtle and is looking to attack your back. 2/3. Grip your opponent's right leg with your right hand and their left sleeve with your left hand. 4. The key to this position is the placement of your right shin across their left thigh as pictured. 5/6/7. Using rolling momentum, and the placement of your shin on your opponent's thigh, rotate over your shoulder and bring your hips right over the back of their left arm. 8/9/10/11. Because of the pressure you are applying on your opponent's arm, they will be forced to roll over and you will end up in side control on top.



Nick Brooks is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident technique guru and a second degree black belt under Roger Gracie.

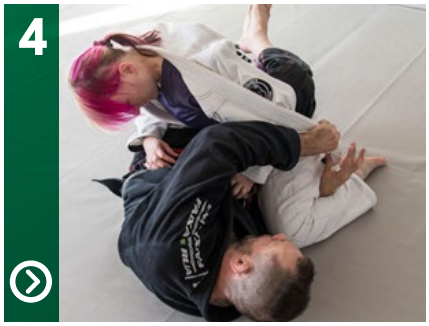
LAPEL GRIP ATTACKS

NICK BROOKS

It is important to remember that your opponent's lapels are very useful weapons when looking to attack with chokes, but they can also be very useful when looking at unorthodox sweeps. I hope you like these techniques!

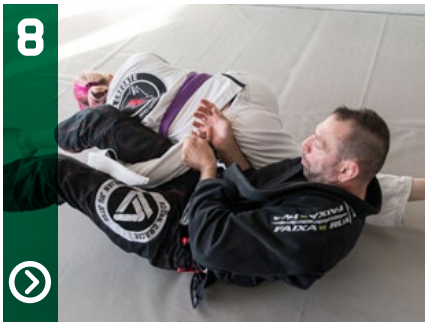
1/2: Starting from the closed guard, pull out your opponent's left lapel with both hands.

3/4: Bring your knees to your chest to break your opponent's posture and at the same time reach underneath their left thigh with your right hand.



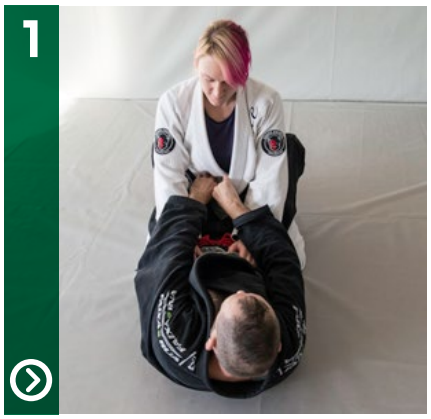
5: Pass your opponent's lapel from your left hand to your right.

6: Next, gain a grip of your opponent's left sleeve with your left hand so you have complete control of their left-hand side.



7/8: Open your guard and attack with an omoplata. Because of your lapel grips, you will find this position much stronger than usual.

9: Sit up and reach for your opponent's right shoulder, locking your hands together to get the finish.



1/2: Starting from the closed guard, pull out your opponent's left lapel with both hands.

3/4: Bring your knees to your chest to break your opponent's posture, at the same time reach underneath their left thigh with your right hand as pictured.

5: Your opponent is hiding their left sleeve from you, so you cannot sweep in the same way as with the omoplata submission technique.

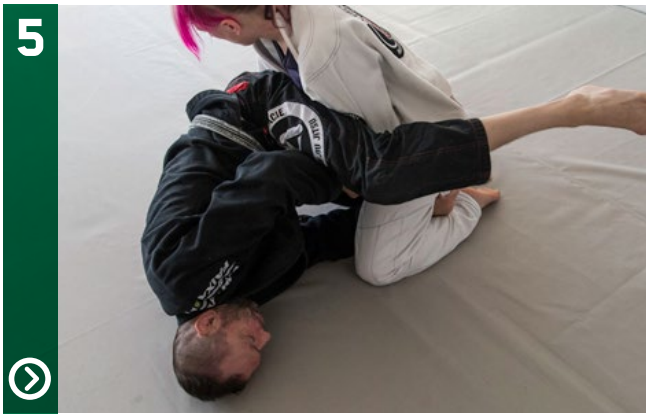
6: However, because of the strength of the lapel grip you have set up, you can open your guard and attack with the omoplata sweep.

7/8/9: Drive your opponent sideways and roll over your arm with the lapel grip.

10/11/12: Finally, let go of your lapel grip and sit through into reverse side control.

1/2/3: You are in half guard and using a low knee shield with your left leg. Reach under your opponent's left leg with your right hand and pass their lapel to that hand to control their hip.

4: Grip your opponent's left sleeve with your left hand.



5/6: Bring your left leg all the way in front of your opponent while pulling on their sleeve, forcing them to fall backwards to the mat as you continue to turn.

6: Your opponent blocks your left arm so you cannot apply a cross choke.

7/8/9: Land with your butt on the mat, with your right elbow on the floor and still controlling their left knee. Keep their knee away from you while pushing with your left foot to free your legs and complete the pass.

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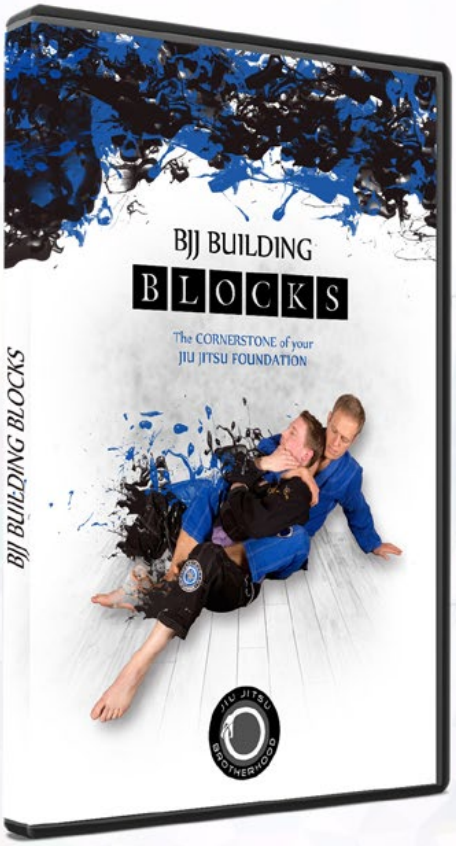

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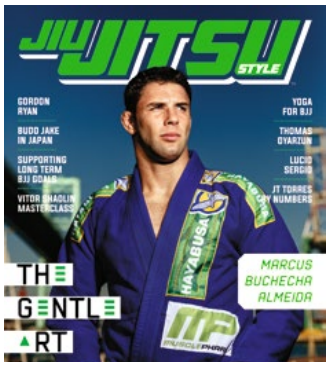

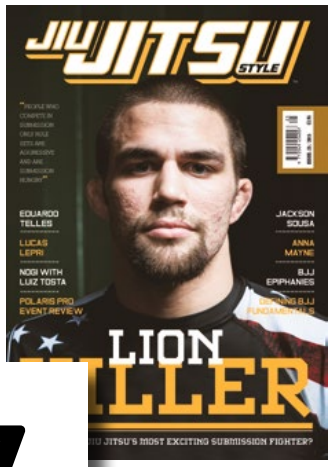

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1/2/3: You are in half guard and using a low knee shield with your left leg. Reach under your opponent's left leg with your right hand and pass their lapel to that hand to control their hip.

4: Grip your opponent's left sleeve with your left hand.

5/6: Bring your left leg all the way in front of your opponent while pulling on their sleeve, forcing them to fall backwards to the mat as you continue to turn.

7/8: As you arrive with your butt on the mat, hug your opponent's knee tight to your chest, while also keeping control of their lapel. Lock a triangle off with your legs, which also secures your opponent's free leg, before sitting back to finish the kneebar.

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MIKE LENG

EATING TO COMBAT INSOMNIA & ARE THERE BENEFITS TO FASTING?

Welcome to another session where I answer your questions on nutrition!

"Make sure that you have a good relaxing routine before bed, go to bed at the same time each night and try not to watch TV or play computer games right before bed as these can all hinder sleep"

We had some really good ones sent in this month and it was really tough to choose just a couple of people to help! Every month I see more and more people getting confused by nutrition and how to structure it specifically for grappling. Either all the advice out there seems to be aimed at body builders, or everything seems to contradict everything else!

As always, if you are looking to get a better understanding of nutrition, then I highly recommend speaking to your coach or a professional about having a plan set up for your individual needs. Consulting your doctor before undertaking any kind of new nutrition plan is also heavily advised.

Many people have a terrible experience when it comes to nutrition as they simply don't know what they are doing, and it's not their fault. There are many schools of thought out there, and they often contradict each other - who isn't going to get confused! Where do you start? Do you fast? Do you carb cycle? Do you have cheats? Do you only eat fruit that has been picked by a female Unicorn under the light of a full moon?

The list of confusing topics is endless.

Not only does it seem that setting up a nutrition plan causes people problems, but then adjusting that plan or tailoring it to your own individual needs keeps tripping people up!

So, I'm here to help.

Here are a few that really caught my eye this month.

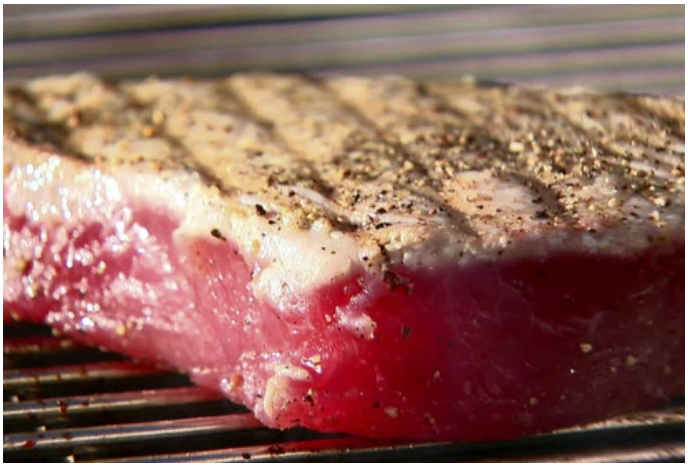
QUESTION 1: I've heard lots said about the benefits of eating fish as my main source of protein, because it's leaner than meat. I've also heard you have to be careful not to eat too much fish in case of mercury poisoning. My question to you is what meat / fish do you eat on a weekly basis? For example, do you eat one serving of red meat per week then all chicken etc?

Firstly, I will say that one protein source is no better than another (providing they are complete proteins).

For me personally I don't eat much fish as I'm not a fan of cooking it. When I go to restaurants (especially abroad) I do eat quite a lot as it can taste amazing. I eat a wide variety of protein, but mostly beef, lamb, pork (shoulder and loin), chicken, eggs and turkey.

As far as mercury poisoning goes, I personally have never seen a case, as you would have to eat such a massive quantity of fish containing it. As with most things, it's the dose that makes the poison. Try to eat a variety of proteins to keep things interesting for yourself.

QUESTION 2: I am a bit of an insomniac, and am always looking to make sure I am doing everything I can to get a decent night sleep. Are there any foods, or times of day I should be eating, that will help promote a good night sleep? I assume I don't want to load up on too much sugar etc?



A lot of people feel that a meal of carbohydrates and some protein gives them a great night sleep. I would also look at a supplement called ZMA that helps promote good sleep (although it could give you some crazy dreams).

Make sure that you have a good relaxing routine before bed, go to bed at the same time each night and try not to watch TV or play computer games right before bed as these can all hinder sleep.

QUESTION 3: Supplements – do I really need them? I am 25 and train pretty much every day, but I've never thought about adding any sort of supplements into my diet. I feel fine most of the time (tired after hard sessions but guessing that's normal) but maybe I could be doing even better with some supplementation.

The short answer is 'no', you don't need them.

As long as your diet gives you all the macro and micro nutrients you need, you do not need supplements. I will say that a lot of people use them to help with making things easier, i.e. protein shakes are very portable and can be taken in a couple of minutes.

Now at the very top of sports, athletes are looking for the smallest bit of an edge to help them win. This is where using certain supplements will help you gain a minor edge. This edge isn't worth much until you get to world championship level though.

QUESTION 4: I'm a student and want to eat healthy, but I am definitely struggling to eat healthy on my tiny budget. I am a big fan of tinned or frozen food (lol) so my challenge is to plan out the healthiest tinned or frozen food diet possible for a day, haha!

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Using frozen meat and veggies is absolutely fine. Just make sure you stick to whole, nutritious foods and not crispy pancakes!!

QUESTION 5: What are the benefits (if any) of these fasting and fruit juice detox diets you see celebs jumping on all about? Fasting, in particular, doesn't make much sense to me, as I am worried I'll lose weight / strength and don't really understand the benefits – can you explain?

There aren't any.

As far as 'cleansing' your body is concerned, that is what your liver and kidneys are for. Any diet or protocol that advocates it is not backed by any form of science and is simply just trying to sell you a product.

Now, fasting is a slightly different thing, and has quite a bit of research backing it. However, it is just another method that can be used within a nutrition plan, it is not the only way to do things. I do use it with a few clients at certain times (or long term) but the person and their preferred eating patterns always mostly govern that. If it doesn't fit in your life very well or your performance suffers, I would not advise doing it.

QUESTION 6: What foods / supplements would you suggest to aid probiotic / gut health? I have read a little bit about good bacteria in your gut being very important to keep you healthy, so wondered if there were any particular foods I should look out for?

I generally get most clients to have a probiotic of some description as I do firmly believe they help overall health. I don't want to start talking about specific brands in this series, but a quick Google search will reveal the better ones. If you want to drop me a message I'm more than happy to recommend a couple.

PROTEIN PANCAKES

Ingredients
2 scoops whey protein
1 tbsp cinnamon
Coconut oil for frying
4 scoops oat flour (blitzed up raw porridge oats in a blender)
2 eggs

Directions
1.Combine all the ingredients for the protein pancakes in a bowl and beat well to combine.

2. Heat a lightly oiled frying pan over medium/high heat. Pour the mixture onto the pan, using approximately 60 ml (or however much you like) for each protein pancake.

3. Cook the pancake for about 2 minutes, until the bottom is light brown. Loosen with a flexible spatula or fish-slice, flip over and cook the other side. Serve hot with your filling of choice.

4. Tilt the pan in a circular motion so that the batter coats the surface evenly.

These are all great questions that highlight the vast difference that people can have in their lives that effect their nutritional approach. Remember that there is no perfect diet. The best plan is the one that fits your lifestyle, and that you can do consistently and that gives you results.

This is a regular column so I am really looking forward to helping a bunch of you! If you have any questions then please send them to:

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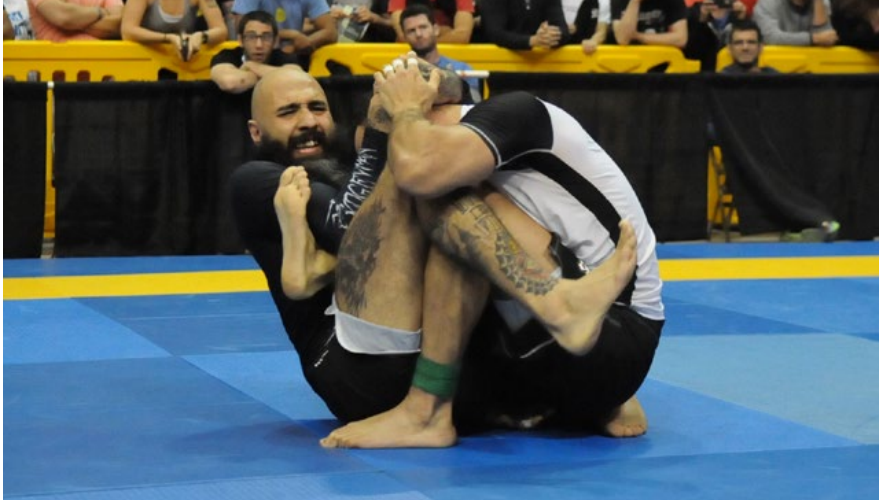


WORDS: BEN WHYBROW

MASTERING THE LOAD

When I think about the fundamentals of injury prevention for BJJ athletes, I will sometimes question, "if I could only give one piece of advice what would it be?" and inevitably it will always come down to load management.

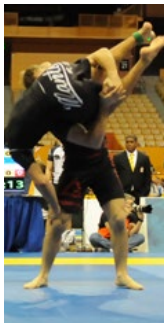
'Load' is a very simple term for the amount of effort and demand we put through our bodies on a daily, monthly and yearly basis and throughout the ups and downs of life (and not the questionable Metallica album).

When we think about the 'load' that BJJ athletes are putting through their bodies it is usually the stresses and strains of gym work, training and competition, with the two main important factors being volume (how much) and intensity (how hard). Volume is measured through time, usually minutes, while intensity is generally measured through something called RPE (rated perceived exertion) which sounds fancy but is just a 0-10 scale of how hard you find something (0 being no effort, 10 being the hardest thing anyone has ever done).

'Acute load' is the amount of load that goes through the body over a short period of time (hours/days) whilst 'chronic load' is the average amount of load we put through our body over a long period of time (months/years). The 'Acute:Chronic Ratio' is another fancy term where you are basically comparing a certain 'acute load' against the average 'chronic load'.

LOAD & INJURIES

Soft tissue injuries (muscle, tendon, ligament and even bone) where no direct trauma is involved will the majority of the time be due to sudden large increases in load. You see, the average chronic load we put our bodies through means our soft tissues will generally adjust their capabilities and strengths to what we ask them to do, (you are what you do). So, if the acute load suddenly becomes a lot greater than the average chronic load, our soft tissues will be asked to do a lot more than they are used to and are potentially capable of, hence they will be at a greater risk of breaking down.



Now, 'breaking down' sounds a lot worse than it actually is, as the majority of the time the overloading of the tissues will generally result in minor strains or sprains, though if these smaller injuries occur repeatedly, or if the acute load is vastly more than the average, the severity of the injury could become a lot greater.

There is no specific point where a sudden increase in acute load will definitely result in injury, but usually anything above 10% more than the average is in the 'danger zone'. Of course the greater the acute load is compared to the average, the higher the risk of injury. Also, injuries may not occur immediately after the sudden increase in load, with some issues occurring as late as four weeks after the spike in load occurred.

CALCULATING LOAD

What I am now going to share is the ever-so-simple equation that those of us in sports medicine use for calculating load, which any coach and athlete can use for load management. It is simply volume (amount of mins) multiplied by effort (score out of ten) for each session. So let's say our BJJ athlete does a 60 minute rolling session and scores it 8/10 for how hard they found it and amount of effort they had to put in. 60 multiplied by 8 equals 480 which is their "number" for that session. The next day let's say they do 90 minute gym session and scored it 5/10. 90 multiplied by 5 equals 450, you can get the idea. You then add all the totals for each session that they did over the past week/month and that will give you a total number for that time period.

To determine the average 'chronic load' we then usually calculate the average from the previous four to six weeks. Let's say our BJJ athlete has numbers of: 1800, 2100, 2200 and 1900. The average "chronic load" for the past four weeks is 2000. Ten percent above this average would be 2200, so if the athlete the following week had a number above this then they would have an increased risk of injury.

Now let me clear in saying that there is no ideal average 'chronic load' number to have. It is not better to have a low number or a very high number as each athlete is different and hence what their bodies can achieve and tolerate is also different.

BEN WHYBROW is a Musculoskeletal and Sports Physiotherapist working with Tsunami MMA and Anglia Ruskin University Judo, as well as the NHS. For more information visit:

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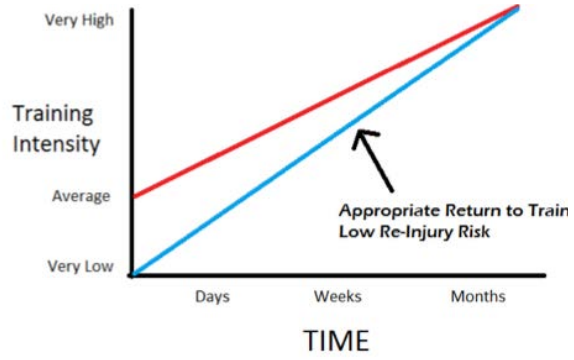
The third part to this load triangle is 'what' the athlete is doing in training. I expect a BJJ athlete to be doing a mix of rolling, technical and gym work sessions throughout the week, with the occasional competition. The same principles apply as before; if our athlete suddenly does a lot more rolling over gym work than normal they again will be asking their tissues to do more than they are used to tolerating, even if their numbers over the week are the same, which again can increase their injury risk. Hence major changes to training programmes should be done gradually to allow time for tissues to adapt.

INCREASING THE LOAD

It is well known that for someone to transition from an average to high level BJJ athlete they need to increase the amount of training they do, as well as training with tougher opponents. Sadly many people will do this suddenly, which will inevitably result in their tissues being unable to tolerate the new stresses being put through them and hence result in an injury occurring down the line, potentially ending their career before it even gets started.

Therefore, if an athlete is planning on increasing the amount and intensity of training it should be done gradually over several weeks/months to give the tissues ample time to adjust to the greater demands, with a lower risk of breaking down.

Not only does this apply to new BJJ athletes, but also to those returning after time off from an injury, illness or other reasons. It's common sense that if an athlete stops training then their level of fitness and strength will reduce with time, so if they try to return to their previous high levels of training the tissues will not be able to immediately tolerate the high loads being put through them. In fact, returning to high level sport too quickly is one of the major reasons why athletes get re-injured, hence a return to high level BJJ training after a period of time off should also be done gradually over several weeks/months to give the tissues time to respond and adapt to the greater load demands.



ADJUSTING THE LOAD

So what if we know in advance that there is going to be an increase in load? Training camps and competitions are notorious places for picking up a lot of injuries, both at the time and afterwards, often because athletes don't go in prepared enough or use rest effectively. If a BJJ athlete knows that an event is coming up then they should push themselves gradually harder in the gym so the body is in a state to tolerate the greater demands of the competition or training camp.

But, also, in the days leading up to the event, and afterwards, sufficient rest is required. This is so that the acute load for that week is not vastly more than average and the athlete is not rolling on an already fatigued body. This could not only be the difference between them winning or losing the match but also reducing the risk of developing injuries both during and sometime after the event.

MONITORING THE LOAD

There are no fancy gadgets or apps required for monitoring a BJJ athlete's load, in fact the most effective means by far is simply the athlete calculating and writing down their own numbers and sessions every day, week to week, so they and their coach can keep a watchful eye, checking it regularly throughout the weeks and months. If you can see that an athlete is on course to produce a significantly higher 'acute' load (more than 10%) compared to their average, then maybe give them the day off, or much easier sessions, so that the tissues have a chance to recover and don't become overloaded.

If a BJJ athlete can do all of the above consistently and keep training at a high level, then their risk of developing injuries will be lower, though that will also depend on other factors which I will discuss in the future.

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Following on from the success of the "Stealth" release, Hayabusa Fightwear has added another premium offering to their list with the upgraded 3.0 Goorudo – their strongest and most premium gi to date.

The Goorudo 3.0 really is a Rolls Royce of a kimono, with the jacket constructed from mighty 550 gsm gold weave fabric and the trousers from 12oz cotton twill. If you're looking for a product to hold up pretty much until you decide it's time to hang up your gi for good, then this could well be the gi for you.

The jacket features numerous uses of Japanese kanjis meaning courage, strength, pride and respect, which obviously resonates well with us jiu jitsu enthusiasts. The cut and fit is very modern, with plenty of length in the sleeves and also on the jacket skirt. The product comes 100% pre-shrunk, which normally doesn't mean a lot, but in this case we saw literally no shrinkage after a number of cold washes – pretty impressive.

The kimono is offered in white, navy blue and black, with the latter being our personal favourite due to the use of red contrast stitching and embroidery. The Goorudo 3.0 is perhaps a little less flamboyant than the 2.0 version, but it's still a very striking offering that will definitely turn heads when you're on the mat. As with all Hayabusa Fightwear products, you can rest assured this gi is of the highest quality, and we envisage a price point to reflect that, once it's released.

GAME OF ROLLS: BJJ'S FIRST CARD GAME

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.GAMEOFROLLS.COM FOR $20

Game of Rolls is a jiu jitsu based card game and learning aid that presents unconventional grappling scenarios, with the emphasis on being creative and simply having fun. The game is based around two grapplers being dealt cards, which then dictate positions that must be achieved within short rounds of sparring. The cards are sweat repellant and water resistant so you can bring them onto the mats.

The primary focus of the game is to force players to step outside their comfort zone, to explore different positions and attempt different submissions than they would otherwise. This broadening of horizons aids in identifying general areas of both strength and weakness, while playfully devoting awareness to various grappling scenarios that otherwise may not be considered. The game favours overall well-roundedness; to become a true master you must be able to submit any given opponent, from any given position, at any given time.

THE RULES

1. From the deck, select the position cards that both players are familiar with to use in the game (there's no point using cards with positions you don't understand yet).
2. Deal two cards to each player
Did you get a wild card? Wild cards are an advantage to the recipient and must be shown openly and implemented before the round begins. They consist of advantages such as "start from any position" or "take another position card". New cards are then dealt to replace any wild cards, so that each player always has two position cards before each round starts.
3. The goal of each round is to achieve the position shown on one of your position cards and maintain control until a submission occurs.

Each round is typically 2-5 minutes long (agreed by the players). A submission can only be attempted after achieving the position from one of your two cards.
4. If a submission is completed, that card is considered "won".
5. Once a submission is achieved or a round is completed, all cards from that round are discarded into a throwaway pile. Two new cards are then dealt from the deck to each player and the gameplay is repeated.
6. The player with the most "won" cards at the end of the game is the winner, and we'd suggest a typical game consists of between three and seven rounds.

Game of Rolls is a novel way to step away from your comfort zone in training and experiment with different positions. Though following the published game rules was fun, we found it hard to complete a game with a definite winner, as you can often spar for quite some time before achieving submissions, especially from new positions.

We'd recommend using the cards as a way of structuring positional sparring during classes, as it offers a creative and random way of initiating your training.

VA "DEFER" COMPRESSION TOP & TIGHTS

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.RVCA.COM

The RVCA 'VA Sport' range has long been a favourite of MMA and jiu jitsu champions BJ Penn and the Mendes Brothers, as well as athletes such as Makua Rothman, Kala Alexander, Dustin Barca and more.

VA Sport gear has always maintained a simple, attractive look, but the main selling point of this latest "Defer" series is the sheer quality of fabric and technical construction that has gone into each product. Put simply, these compression top and tights are the best we've ever worn.

The products feature a combination of grey colouring, offset with panels of black. The sleeves on the top and ankle sections of the tights feature the Defer pattern, which gives the garments a really classy look on close inspection.

The technical attention to detail is just fantastic, as the sleeve and ankle sections include what appear to be two areas of stitching – the first offering one level of compression and the second (at the end of the openings) cut slightly looser. Ok, we know it's hard to explain, but the sleeves and ankle areas on the products are amazingly tailored and comfortable.

The material used is of such a high standard that you don't see the bobbling or deterioration that often occurs on regular rashguards after extensive use. On top of that, they keep you extremely cool and fresh during intense training, as the fabric used is designed to take sweat away from the body.

The hardest task you may have is actually getting your hands on these products, as the stock seems to leave the RVCA store as quick as it comes in. However, we can't recommended their products highly enough, so keep an eye on www.rvca.com for their next drop.

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GI SPOTLIGHT | KINGZ 'NANO' KIMONO

OVERVIEW

The Nanō is an ultra-light, subtly styled and impressively durable offering from powerhouse brand, Kingz Kimonos. The gi is unique in offering cotton drill pants (rather than ripstop) yet still coming in as a very light, competition friendly option that is priced extremely competitively, at just £89.99/€101.

JACKET

With a slogan like "Reign Supreme" and regal crown logos forming the basis of their branding, it's fair to say we are big fans of Kingz and their uniquely styled jiu jitsu gear. The jacket features some cool, abstract Nanō branding over the left collar bone, as well as the main Kingz crown motifs on both upper arms. The use of black and grey variants on our white sample jacket keep it understated, but fans of something a little more eye catching will enjoy the gold branding offered on the black or blue versions of this kimono.

The jacket is made from one piece of 370 gsm pearl weave cotton, making it as light as a feather and a fantastic travel or competition product. All stress points have been triple reinforced, so durability is not an issue; there were no signs of deterioration in our sample after a month of testing.

TROUSERS

The trousers are kept clean and fresh, with Nanō branding being located only on the lower left leg and a Kingz patch on the upper right thigh. We're a huge fan of cotton drill products over ripstop alternatives, so these 8oz drill trousers were ideal, keeping us feeling light and cool while rolling.

DETAILS

The jacket cut deserves a special mention, as it hugged in all the right areas and left ample length in the sleeves to accommodate the small shrinkage expected after washing. You can expect around 10% shrinkage after a few cold washes, so keep that in mind when choosing your size. It is also worth noting that Kingz offer a great range of sizes, including A1L, A2L and A3L, so you will have plenty of options available to make sure you get the ideal fit for your body type.

It's amazing just how far kimono technology has come. In creating the Nanō, Kingz have released a top notch, ultra-lightweight kimono that would rival the durability of heavy-duty products on the market from just a few years ago. In all honesty, it's hard to pick any technical fault here, and purchase decisions can only really be based on the aesthetics and the pricing (though the price is pretty awesome considering the quality).

SUMMARY

This is an all-round great purchase, which won't leave you disappointed in terms of rolling performance and durability. Ultra-lightweight kimonos are always a great option when training in hot conditions, but we found the combination of wearing the Nanō alongside a long sleeve rashguard and spats was also great for those cold, wintry mornings. For fans of more heavy duty kimonos, it is worth checking out the Kingz website, as they've plenty of other great options available.

AVAILABLE VIA KINGZEUROPE.COM FOR £89.99/€101

PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

POLARIS PRO 4

The Polaris Pro team continue to put together the world's best professional jiu jitsu events.

The latest Polaris instalment took place in late October at the Poole Lighthouse on the south coast of England, with a fight card that, as always, was sure to throw up plenty of entertainment and surprises.

Polaris Pro 4 included the first major changes to the rules since conception, with a panel of judges being introduced to render decisions in the absence of submissions. This new addition to the rules worked extremely well, with four of the eight main card matches going to decision.

The judges (Dan Hardy, Mark Goddard and David Onuma) based their decisions on the grappler's ability to implement effective attacks and aggression, escalating positional control, as well as using counter attacks and dynamic escapes.

Headlines were reserved for Danaher Death Squad honcho, Garry Tonon, who tapped Gilbert Burns in the co-main event, despite "Durinho" missing weight and dominating early in the match. We must also reserve a special mention for Yas Wilson, who survived a full 15 minutes against the much heavier, four-time IBJJF World Champion, Dominyka Obelenyte.

The show also marked the return of Fernando 'Terere' Augusto to competitive jiu jitsu, who showed he was still on top of the game in a dominant performance against the in-form Victor 'Shaolin' Ribeiro.

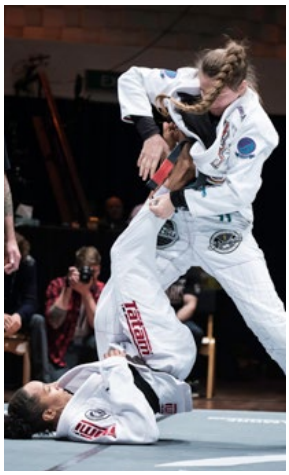
Top:
Tom Breese
vs Ben Dyson
Bottom:
Dominyka Obelenyte
vs Yas Wilson

TOM BREESE VS BEN DYSON

WINNER: TOM BREESE VIA REFEREE DECISION

Ben Dyson has been in fantastic form over the past 12 months, having picked-up notable wins across a host of UK grappling promotions, including a kimura victory over Travis Newaza at Polaris Pro 3. Tom Breese took time away from his UFC career in facing Dyson and was looking to avenge a submission defeat from their previous encounter.

Breese quickly imposed his physical dominance in this match, initiating takedowns and forcing Dyson to work from his guard. Dyson, despite throwing up an early triangle, was unable to mount any genuine attacks during the match, while Breese maintained positional dominance throughout to secure the decision win.



DOMINYKA OBELENYTE VS YAS WILSON

WINNER: DOMINYKA OBELENYTE VIA REFEREE DECISION

For us, this was the fight of the night. Yas Wilson, Roger Gracie's first female black belt, was not only outweighed by over 20kg, but went up against the reigning IBJJF black belt champion and most decorated female jiu jitsu athlete out there - Dominyka Obelenyte.

The match started at a high pace, with Obelenyte looking to pass and create submission opportunities from the top. After a couple of minutes feeling out Yas' guard, it wasn't long before the Marcelo Garcia black belt was in mount and looking certain to pick up the submission.

In what can only be described as an act of true heart and determination, Wilson survived the 15 minutes without giving up, and despite losing the match via decision, she picked up one of the biggest rounds of applause of the night.

EDUARDO RIOS VS CHARLES NEGROMONTE

WINNER: CHARLES NEGROMONTE VIA REFEREE DECISION

Returning to Polaris Pro for the second time was Frontline Jiu Jitsu founder, Eduardo "Teta" Rios, to face the lesser known, but dangerous, Charles Negromonte.

Teta, who looked to be in phenomenal shape, hit two huge double leg takedowns early in the match, showcasing his excellent wrestling and forcing Negromonte to re-address his approach. After securing a jumping guillotine grip, Charles forced his opponent to the mat, which proved to be the catalyst for the eventual win.

Negromonte worked busily from the top, then used excellent pressure passing to secure mount and came close to choking Teta with an arm triangle. Eventually, after a few scrambles and a neat rolling kimura attack from Charles, the match went to a decision.

Top:
Charles Negromonte
vs Eduardo Rios
Bottom:
Nathan Orchard
vs Masakazu Imanari

NATHAN ORCHARD VS MASAKAZU IMANARI

WINNER: NATHAN ORCHARD VIA REAR NAKED CHOKE

With Denny Prokopos pulling out of this match due to injury, it was fellow 10th Planet black belt, Nathan Orchard, who took on the legend from Japan – Imanari.

Orchard was clearly pumped up for this encounter, and had managed to recover well after an extremely tough weight cut the day before.

Imanari pulled guard quickly, but spent most of the time on the back foot preventing the pass. However, Orchard did break through the Japanese fighter's defence, before securing back control and locking off an excellent rear naked choke. Though the choke was secured over Imanari's chin, it was still good enough to get the tap. Sadly, Orchard's dominant display could spell the end of Imanari's pro jiu jitsu career.

JACKSON SOUSA VS DILLON DANIS

WINNER: DILLON DANIS VIA INSIDE HEEL HOOK

Dillon Danis is currently one of the most talked about jiu jitsu athletes, thanks in no small part to his association with Conor McGregor and helping the MMA star prepare for his last few fights. Credit must go to Danis for agreeing to fight a heavier opponent in Jackson Sousa, who many believe should have been crowned IBJJF champion earlier this year.

Sousa started aggressively, looking to take his opponent down and utilise wrestling. Danis must have thought it wasn't going to be his day when his tight guillotine attack had to be released because the athletes were close to falling off the stage. However, he managed to rally with a fantastic heel hook finish after a number of exchanges and picked up a very impressive win over one of the best athletes out there.

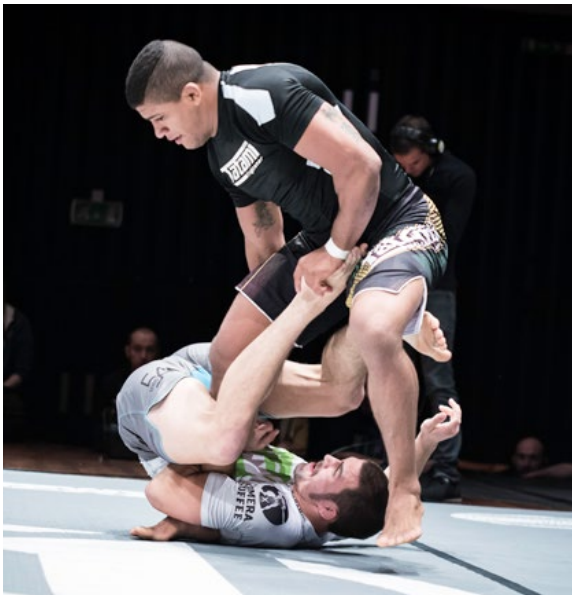
Top:
Dillon Danis
vs Jackson Sousa
Bottom:
AJ Agazarm
vs Ikuhisa Minowa

AJ AGAZARM VS IKUHISA MINOWA

WINNER: AJ AGAZARM VIA TRIANGLE

Agazarm vs 'Minowaman' has to go down as the most bizarre match of the night, but we wouldn't have expected anything less. Ikuhisa Minowa is a veteran of Japanese MMA and pro wrestling, and his comedic ability to play up to the crowd was clear from the get go. Donning his iconic red wrestling trunks and kneepads, Minowa floated around the mat for the early exchanges, striking the occasional pose and gaining a laugh from the crowd.

Sadly, Minowa's jiu jitsu was quickly shown to be less than adequate, with AJ taking him down and passing his guard quickly. The match eventually came to an end when Agazarm locked-off a triangle and finished the submission, picking up his second Polaris Pro victory along the way.



Top:
Gilbert Burns
vs Garry Tonon
Bottom:
Vitor Ribeiro
vs Fernando Terere

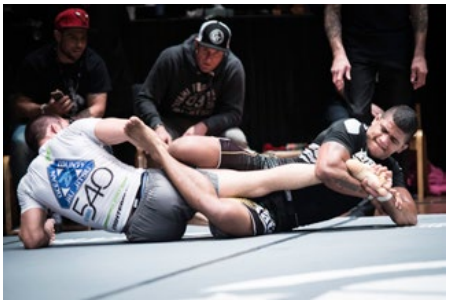
GARRY TONON VS GILBERT BURNS

WINNER: GARRY TONON VIA HEEL HOOK

Taking to the mat in a Captain America robe, and followed by teammate Gordon Ryan who was sporting a crown and comedy shades, you can't deny that Garry Tonon is truly at home on the professional stage, and under Polaris Pro rules. In contrast, Gilbert Burns looked notably bigger, focused and eager to get things underway as the referee started proceedings.

'Durinho' started in lightning quick fashion, scoring multiple takedowns that led to awesome and unorthodox scrambles during the opening exchanges. The UFC fighter almost took Tonon's back on one occasion; a missed opportunity he'd ultimately rue.

Tonon went on to showcase just how talented his leg lock game is, securing a heel hook finish from a belly down position. Though Gilbert's general jiu jitsu and positional control on the night was greatly superior to his opponent's, it seems no-one can keep up with Tonon's leg lock attacks. Event promoters will be left scratching their heads when looking for his next opponent.



VITOR RIBEIRO VS FERNANDO TERERE

WINNER: FERNANDO TERERE VIA REFEREE DECISION

Seeing these two legends face-off on a professional jiu jitsu stage in the UK was an absolute treat, and Terere was clearly focused on avenging his loss to Shaolin in 2001. As expected, Ribeiro pulled guard early, but struggled to secure any dominant grips or enforce his will.

As the match progressed, Terere showed he's still got plenty of miles left under his competition belt. He never once looked in danger and put tremendous pressure on his opponent, who struggled to retain his guard.

In the latter stages, Shaolin became aware that he needed to stamp his authority on proceedings and looked to establish grips from standing. However, Terere brought the crowd to their feet, securing a beautiful seoi nage attack that cemented his victory with the judges as the clock expired.

PRELIMINARY CARD

REYCE ASESIMBA VS DYLAN O'BRIEN
WINNER: REYCE ASESIMBA VIA ARMBAR

JANIS RIEKSTINS VS MIHA PERHAVEC
WINNER: MIHA PERHAVEC VIA HEEL HOOK

PHIL HARRIS VS SPENCER HEWITT
WINNER: PHIL HARRIS VIA HEEL HOOK

PAUL BRIDGES VS JEFF LAWSON
WINNER: JEFF LAWSON VIA ARMBAR

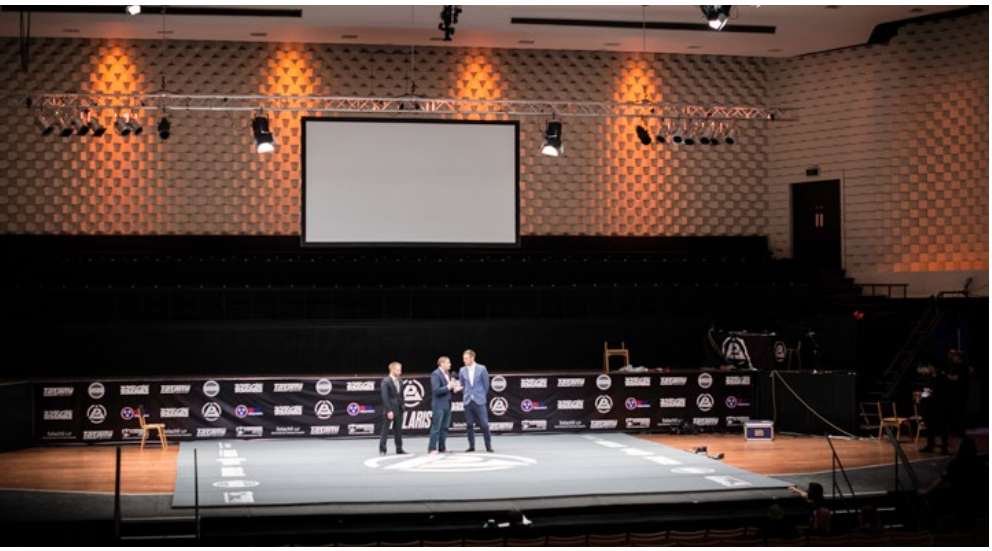
MARCO CANHA VS ROSS NICHOLLS
WINNER: ROSS NICHOLLS VIA REFEREE DECISION

Top:
Reyce Asesimba
vs Dylan O'Brien
Middle right:
Janis Riekstins
vs Miha Perhavec
Middle left:
Paul Bridges
vs Jeff Lawson
Below:
Phil Harris
vs Spencer Hewitt
Bottom:
Ross Nicholls
vs Marco Canha

WORDS: MATT BENYON

POLARIS PRO 4 POST EVENT REFLECTIONS

Our fourth event in, we can call, overall, a success. For those who are interested, we improved on the third broadcast in a number of ways.



We added picture in picture, to show coaches without distracting attention from the action. We also invested in a hothead camera (at least, I think that's what it's called), as opposed to a static overhead, which was able to zoom and rotate on the action. On weigh-in day, the day before, when we had all the athletes together in one place, we filmed "talking heads" interviews that we were able to quickly edit and insert into the broadcast the next day, giving the show more of a professional, UFC-style feel.

Everything ran fairly smoothly. There were one or two hiccups on weigh-in day - the first being Nathan Orchard pacing the hotel nervously and checking his weight as he tried to sweat off around eight kilograms, and really struggling with the last 400 grams. The second was Terere, conspicuous by his absence. He had been in London the night before, so we were puzzled when he missed his time slot for his video interview. Lee from Tatami called him on the phone at around two in the afternoon, and he casually informed us he was in Bristol, approximately three hours away. I suppose if being slightly late for the weigh-in was the worst thing that happened to Terere on this trip, we were in good shape.

Gilbert Burns missed weight; in the lead up to the event he had protested the lower weight limit, but once Garry called him out on social media, he readily accepted. In hindsight, he probably knew he would struggle. He told us that the cut to 155 for MMA was incredibly tough on his body and he couldn't manage it for the match against Garry. The preliminary card, streamed live and free to YouTube, was fireworks all the way. Rising star Reyce Asesimba nailed a quick flying triangle in our teens match, and Jeff Lawson, in front of the home crowd, sent his opponent, Paul Bridges, flying through the air with a picture perfect seoi nage, followed by an armbar. The crowd went bananas. We leave a gap between the prelims and the main card, giving us a chance to make sure we are in good shape technically, and giving the audience a chance to get a drink and browse the merchandise.

The crowd at Polaris never fails to deliver. They're loud, passionate, educated in grappling and have a sense of humour, well illustrated when Minowaman took to the stage. The unassuming Japanese grappler removed his tracksuit to reveal bright red pants and knee pads. The crowd made an appreciative noise, causing Minowaman to glance sideways at them, eliciting a further roar of appreciation. The banter between AJ, Minowaman and the crowd continued during the match, creating a highly enjoyable tension in the auditorium.

"OUR EVENTS TEAM DID AN INCREDIBLE JOB. EVERYTHING WAS PERFECT EXCEPT FOR A FEW SHORT (BUT PAINFUL) MINUTES OF STREAMING PROBLEMS"

The broadcast was not without its issues. Due to technical reasons beyond our control, the professionals we entrusted to stream the video for us had some problems for the first 20 minutes, leading some viewers (around 10%) to experience trouble watching the stream. On this point, I have to say, I was absolutely heartbroken. Not only was I disappointed with the technical issues (you can believe me when I say, the first people to feel the pain of technical problems are the people whose livelihood depends on the show), but I was very disappointed to read the comments on our social media. It being the year 2016, and the show being broadcast on "the internet", people wanted it fixed, and they wanted it right the f*** now what the f*** is wrong with your website you f**kin a**holes give me back my f**king money.

The comments were pouring in and each one of them was read and taken to heart. I really couldn't believe it. I wanted to remind people, hey, we're doing our best here. The professional jiu jitsu industry, as I mentioned in my first article, is a crazy place. You've got athletes who want to make a living from grappling, and fans who are very reluctant to part with any money to watch people grapple. Running a show is essentially a losing proposition in the short term as we pick up the deficit between those two ends of the spectrum. We fund it not only with our own money but with our hearts, our effort, our drive to create something new and exciting for the jiu jitsu community. I felt disappointed that we were not being given a chance to fix the mistakes and to grow as a show. Our fans had elevated things to defcon 5 instantly and it just felt bad all round. I am certain that we lost pay per view sales due to those 20 minutes of problems and the ensuing social media rants, but hey, that's life. It was a lesson for me - as one of the organisers of the show, I need to stay the hell away from social media on the night; I can't not take the comments personally.

By about Sunday evening though, once all the mean and nasty internet people's words had stopped echoing around my head, I was feeling excellent about Polaris once again. The fighters all did an incredible job. Our events team did an incredible job. Everything was perfect except for a few short (but painful) minutes of streaming problems. When I watch the replay of the full broadcast, I feel proud and excited. The feedback from fighters is universally positive. They all feel looked after and want to come back and fight again. Oh, and we managed to shoehorn in our new judging system and the best thing about that was, nobody even noticed - that's how well it fitted in with the show.

We hope that you tune into the next show, because every pay per view dollar counts in these early stages. Also, if we do experience technical issues, please remember two things. 1) We almost definitely have realised that something is wrong and are working frantically to fix it. 2) Nothing good ever comes from saying mean things online.

MATT BENYON
Creative Director
Polaris Pro & Scramble Brand

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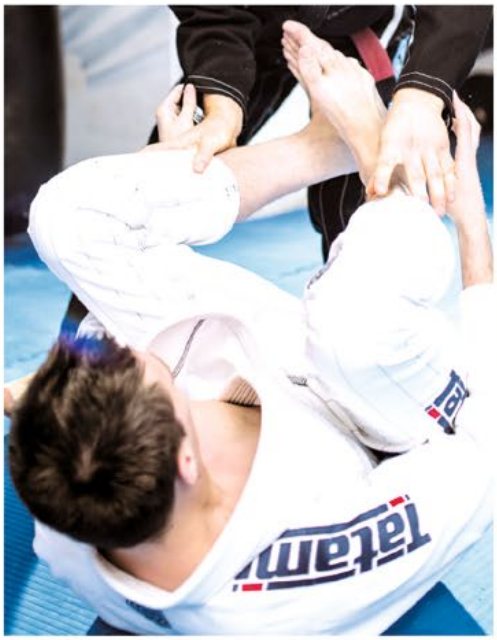
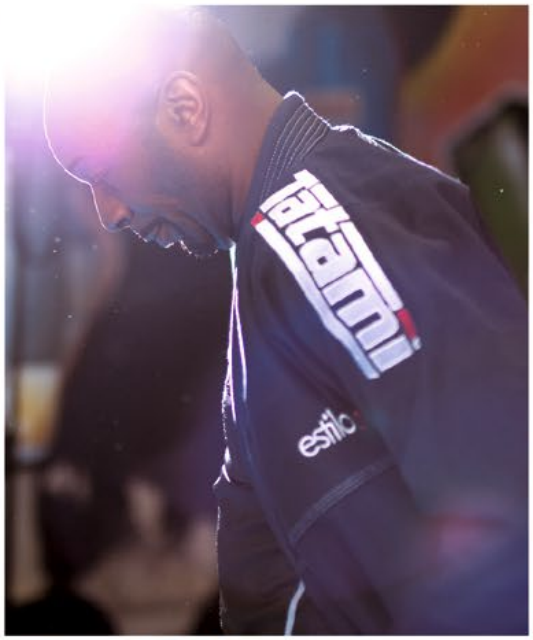
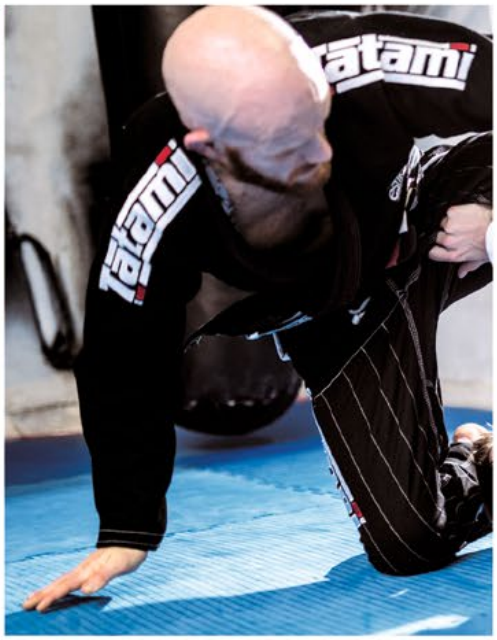
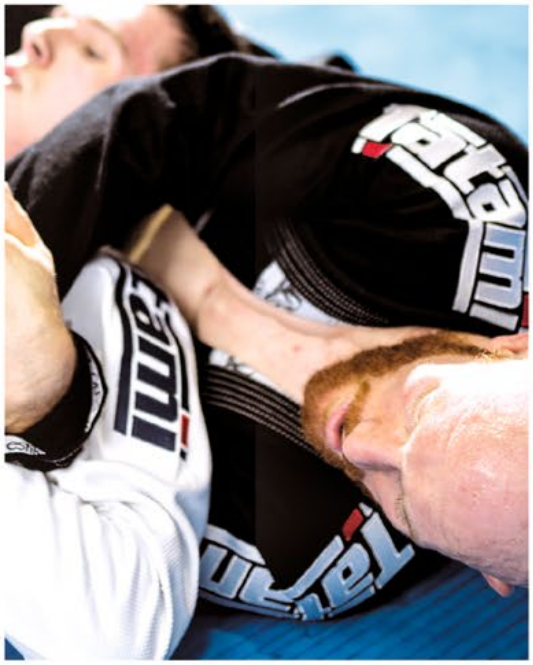
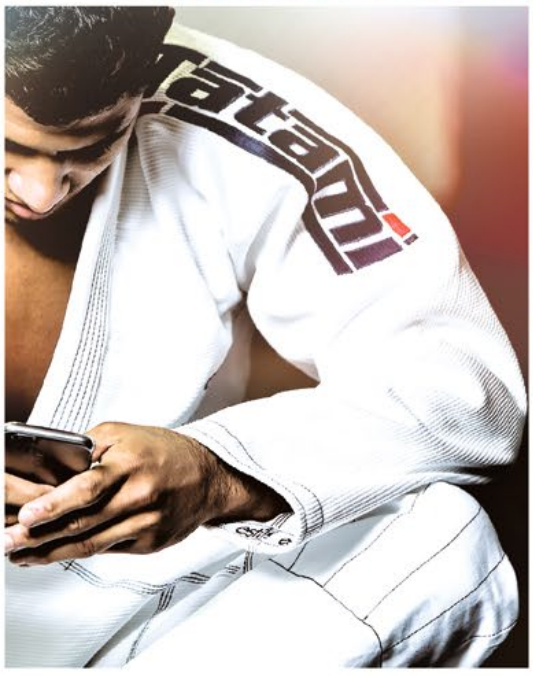
THE BALANCE OF OPPOSITES

Artist Network Program





Tatami fightwear

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